

# THE LEHIGH REVIEW

A Student Journal  
of the Arts and Sciences



Volume 9  
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# THE LEHIGH REVIEW



A Student Journal of the Arts and Sciences

VOLUME NINE

SPRING—FALL 2001

Each year, Lehigh University publishes the *Lehigh Review*, a student journal of the arts and sciences. Each issue contains some of the best writing by Lehigh students.

Any scholarly articles, academic essays, or book reviews may be submitted. The *Review* does not ordinarily accept fiction or poetry.

All submissions should reflect the breadth and depth of the liberal arts. We are especially interested in submissions that draw from the content or methodology of more than one discipline. The *Review* expects students to submit well-researched and well-written work that exceeds a mere synthesis of existing sources. Submissions should demonstrate imagination, original insight, and mastery of the subject.



*Judge Melville B. Gerry, on pronouncing sentencing said: "There was seven Dimmunks in Hamdale County! But you, yah vicious, main-eatin son of a bitch, yah et five of them."*

A. Packer



A. Packer

*"...he had long contemplated doing something for the benefit of his state, and especially of the Lehigh Valley. From that valley, he said he had derived much of the wealth which God had given to him, and so the best interests of that valley he wished to devote a portion of it in the founding of some educational institution, for the intellectual and moral improvement of the young men of that region."*

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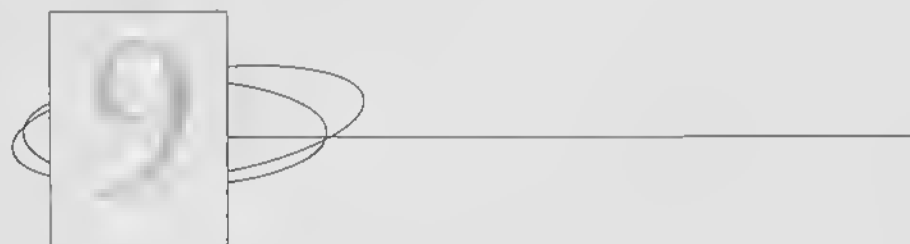
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The opinions expressed in the articles published in this journal do not  
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All submissions and queries should be addressed to *The Lehigh Review*  
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## Ninety Ate

The Lehigh Valley has been invaded by the nine muses; those fortunate enough to be paid a visit have earned a place here, in the ninth edition of the *Lehigh Review*. The *Review* is in touch with its astrological side and is deeply affected by the rotation of the planets, and since the eighth and ninth planets trade places periodically (which is occurring now), it was time for the *Review* to make a change. Although this was due to be the ninth edition, the eighth reappeared in its place, and the infamous Battle of Ninety-Eight took place; Nine won, of course. And so we present all new material that will make you jump up and down nine times throughout the read. In the future, the ninth edition of the *Lehigh Review* will certainly be considered the ninth wonder of the world, the ate being our continued support from our inspiration, Alfred Packer. (Give him a hand.) We would like to pass this inspiration on to our readers, so dig your teeth into the *Review* and devour it. Bon appetit.

—Amy Burchard





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\* Williams Prize Winner



## Bizarre and Beyond: The Photography of Diane Arbus

OLIVIA N. KYLE

*I really believe there are things nobody would see  
if I didn't photograph them.*

Diane Arbus

Many people are afraid of what they can't see and often prefer to go through life believing that ignorance is bliss. However, American photographer Diane Arbus seemed to believe otherwise, choosing to place the "un-ordinary" under the focus of her camera lens. This amazing artist is best known for her riveting portraits from the 1960s of the unusual, the fantastic, and the freakish; three characteristics for which she always had a passion. "Freaks were a thing I photographed a lot," said Arbus. "...they had a terrific kind of excitement for me. Most people go through life dreading they'll have a traumatic experience. Freaks were born with their trauma. They've already passed their test in life. They're aristocrats," (Untitled, 1972: 3). Now Arbus is considered by many to be a classic American artist, and her distinctly personal approach is often imitated (The Cosmic Baseball Association: online).



Untitled (1) 1970-1971

Arbus was born Diane Nemerov in New York City in 1923 to fairly well-off parents who were proprietors of an upscale fur and women's clothing store (The Encyclopedia Britannica: online). As a young girl, she was schooled in private institutions

and overly sheltered by her parents. Arbus discovered her artistic talents (although she would not have called them that) about the time she entered high school. She began with painting, all the while being told how fantastic a painter she was. However, Arbus was never a person of high self-esteem, so she came to despair when people told her what an incredible painter she was. "I had the sense that if I was so terrific at it, it wasn't worth doing," she said (Untitled, 1972: 5-6).

Upon graduation from high school in the 1940s, Arbus's painting career completely ceased, and she decided to try that which her husband, Allan Arbus (by whom she would have two daughters and later divorce), had been doing for some time—photography. It seems that this was the start of her destiny, for she devoted the rest of her brief life to photographing people's lives.

During Arbus's early years of photography, she experimented with different techniques, although she disliked calling them "techniques." "It sounds like something up your sleeve," she once said (Untitled, 1972: 9). She began photography using a 35mm camera with no artificial light and a somewhat blurry lens to give her pictures a "grainy" look. Arbus liked the way these grainy photographs looked, "like a kind of tapestry of all these little dots," because it made everything in the photograph blend together as one (Untitled, 1972: 8-9). Eventually she became tired of the "dots" and instead turned to using a twin-lens reflex camera, the same type used by almost all studio photographers at the time. She employed a flash on this camera, whether she was outside or inside, so as to cast out all shadows from the frame and create photographs of piercing clarity (Hinson, 1984: 129). This camera not only allowed Arbus to capture the extreme detail and clarity her previous photographs lacked, but it also became a major element of her style. Additionally, the twin-lens reflex camera gave her the advantage of maintaining more natural contact with her subjects, since it was required that the camera be held at her waist as she looked down into the lens. Because of this, Arbus was able to strengthen the connection she made with each individual subject (Magazine Work, 1984: 159). Arbus also began to develop her photographs from this camera on perfectly square paper. The square, rather than rectangular format eventually became a signature for Arbus.

After several years of amateur photography, Arbus and her husband embarked upon a career in commercial and fashion photography. Diane Arbus dedicated eleven years of her life to this career, creating works that were published in many popular magazines at that time—*Esquire*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Show*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Nova*. She published over 250 pictures, every one a masterpiece, in more than seventy magazine articles after her first publication of a portfolio in *Esquire* entitled "The Vertical Journey," (Magazine Work, 1984: 152).

"The Vertical Journey," which established Arbus as a professional photographer in the public eye, contained six photographs of dramatically different people from New York—"Six Movements of a Moment within the Heart of the City" was its subtitle. These six quite poignant photographs ranged from that of "The Jungle Creep," a man with so much hair that he resembled a gorilla, to Flora Knapp Dickinson, a



*Hezekiah Traubler, The #742*

Daughter of the American Revolution, in an unknown deceased person at the city morgue (Magazine Work, 1984: 8-13, 154-156). Not only did Arbus deviate from what was considered "acceptable" photography at the time (or "normal" people), but she also started an entirely new type of photography as art—the portrayal of "everyday" (and not so "everyday") people's lives.

During her years of "magazine work," Arbus met and studied under professional photographer Lisette Model. Having always been told to photograph subjects in whom everyone can relate or generalize, Arbus was amazed by the idea Model had of photographing individual people and their individual lives. This was where she began to develop her extremely unique style and her obsession with the "freaks" of American society.

Soon after these studies with Model, Arbus began to devote much of her time to documenting transvestites, twins, midgets, people on the streets and in their homes, asylum inmates, and minorities (Masters of Photography: online). She wanted to show others the unusual and horrific side of society in a beautiful way.

Despite her reputation, Diane Arbus did not merely photograph those who came from the "edge" of society. Much of Arbus's work in the magazines focused on the lives of famous individuals. In January of 1965, an intimate portrait of Mae West was published in *Show* with text and photographs by Arbus. In 1966, an article on James Brown was published in *New York: The Sunday Herald Tribune Magazine* with photographs taken by Arbus. In addition, she completed photo journals of Tiny Tim, Roy Liechensstein, Mrs. Martin Luther King Jr., and Norman Mailer. These portraits were like no other that had ever been taken in the past, for Arbus was able to show the emotions of these individuals very lucidly and beautifully. John Szarkowski, the director of the Museum of Modern Art's Department of Photography, once said of her: "The portraits of Diane Arbus show that all of us—the most ordinary and the most exotic of us—



*A young Brooklyn family #AAB*



*Mar West 1965*

tures of them. When looking at her photograph entitled "A young Brooklyn family going for a Sunday outing" (see photograph 3), one can see the close bond that exists between parents and children. No matter whom it was that she photographed, she was seemingly able to make an unspoken connection with that person: "Her photographs tell us stories that have never been told before with the camera," (Hinson, 1984: 129). Through her camera, Arbus was capable of "looking into" people's lives.

"She was genuinely interested in them, and they became entranced by her, enamored of her. If she was next to somebody, near somebody, and she wanted to photograph him or her, she would send out her interest. It was as if a bloom would just open up, and they would see her, and she would say something to them in hardly an audible way, and they would listen. People [gave] themselves over to her. When you look at [her] pictures, their subjects are just flowing out toward her, giving up their mystery. Diane was an emissary from the world of feeling. She cared about these people. They felt that and gave her their secret."

— Joel Meyerowitz on Diane Arbus  
(Masters of Photography; online)

It was this relationship that the charismatic Arbus established with her subjects that truly gave her work its distinctiveness and beauty.

One of the remarkable aspects of Diane Arbus's career was that for her, photography as an art was never solely done for monetary gain. She seemed to obtain a sort of spiritual sentiment from it, growing from the intense relationship for which she always strove between artist and subject (The Cosmic Baseball Association; online).

Unfortunately, the spiritual reward she obtained was not fulfilling enough. In 1971, after suffering from clinical depression for many years, Diane Arbus committed suicide. Perhaps the lives of the people she photographed overwhelmed her to the point of no return. It truly remains a mystery as to how such an incredible artist could end everything so abruptly. However, long before she died, Arbus had already established herself as a legendary and respected figure in the world of photography. Arguably, none since her time have been able to achieve what she did with a camera. Her photographic displays of emotions, the secrets of society, and the beauty of the unknown cannot be duplicated, and they will never be forgotten.

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## Drugs, Drugs, Drugs: From Psychotherapy to Psychopharmacy

BERNADETTE DI TORO

*Feeling fatigued? Take Prozac.*

*Feeling as though you've lost your enthusiasm or direction?*

*Take Paxil or Zoloft, especially if Prozac hasn't worked.*

*Feeling trapped in an abusive relationship? Take Effexor, Luvox, or Lithium.*

*Feeling a little nervous? Take Xanax, Klonopin, or Ativan.*

*Having trouble disciplining your child? Give the child Ritalin, or Dextroamine, or Adderall.*

*Having trouble focusing on work that bores you? Try Ritalin for yourself.*

*Having ups and downs of any kind? Take any number of psychiatric drugs.<sup>1</sup>*

The above quote is not merely an exaggeration of the currently available variety of psychiatric drugs. Today, there is a drug for almost any ailment, from the alleviation of a headache, to the headache of an unwanted pregnancy. Drugs are also prescribed to treat any adverse feelings that a person might experience from a so-called physical or emotional "problem". Drugs have become a major market and they are the leading force behind biomedical research today. Prescription drugs are a staple in American culture, so much so that the issue of prescription drugs has been the major issue in this year's race for the presidency. Americans now believe that as Americans they have the right to inexpensive prescription drugs. People seem to believe that prescription drugs, and in particular, psychiatric drugs, are the only cure for all of the illnesses they assume are afflicting them. Why do they believe this is so? Because the drug companies tell them so and people believe them. They have come to trust the media and believe in a notion of science that unfortunately may not exist.

The biomedical paradigm may be inadequate, narrow, misleading and quite possibly a socially constructed illusion dependent on an economic market driven by claims of scientific authority. The process by which mental illness is defined may be best approached from a psychosocial perspective and not solely on medical authority. George Engel suggests an example of the problem of definition as it pertains to mental illness. He states, "Are the fatigue and weakness of the woman who recently lost



her husband conversion symptoms, psychophysiological reactions, manifestations of a somatic disorder or a combination of these?"<sup>2</sup> He makes the statement that there is a distinction between that which is thought to be psychological, psychiatric, and social, and Engel argues that a person who seeks the advice of a medical doctor should have confidence that the physician has obtained the appropriate knowledge "to make such a differentiation" in diagnosis. Research under the biomedical paradigm insists that all behavior, including emotional responses to situation and/or physiological conditions, is related to biochemical disorders or imbalances in the brain. Under this paradigm, drugs have been created that are available for a number of self-declared states of being and states of mal-being for doctors to prescribe after diagnosis.

According to the biomedical paradigm, all mental illness can be attributed to organic dysfunction within the brain. Human behavior is considered the result of culminating actions within the brain, specifically, chemical reactions. The biomedical paradigm of mental illness insists that chemical events within the brain are responsible for all thoughts, behaviors, emotions, and human motivation. Behavior and mood disorders are thought to occur in part from chemical imbalances in the brain. Drugs have been developed and continue to be developed to treat such chemical imbalances. The use of neurotropic drugs is still very much a new area of research and most of the public is unaware of the origins and the real effects of these "discoveries." These drugs are based on a scientific theory of how the mind/brain functions which is refutable and must be explored through many paradigms before we may, if ever at all, understand the brain and human behavior. Doctors are less likely to consider the nuances of an emotional (behavioral) state based on the availability of a corresponding drug that claims to alter such a feeling.

The history of the development of scientific authority is necessary in order to gain an understanding of how the present biomedical paradigm evolved. Other perspectives of how the mind works and contributors to the development of mental illness, most notably, Sigmund Freud, greatly influenced the study of the mind and mental illness. Currently, medical science has asserted itself as the branch of science that holds the key to understanding the brain through genetic research and molecular biology. Careful research into the history of the development of pharmacological therapies reveals the serendipitous creation of many of the drugs marketed today. Included in this history are the political and economic dynamics that employ scientists, motivate drug research, and create further diagnoses for an already over-standardized, over-generalized, medical model of behavior.

### **The Limitations of the Biomedical Paradigm**

There currently exists a problem within the field of mental health, though many experts would refuse to acknowledge the dilemma. The biomedical model of mental illness suggests that any deviation from the norm (as usually defined by society and diagnosed by "experts" in the medical field) is directly related to some specific ur-

ganic dysfunction within the brain (Engel 1986). The result of the research and development of psychiatric drugs under this paradigm means that any deviation from social norms, or accepted normal behavior, is a result of the brain's dysfunction, which neglects psychological, sociological, and cultural influences on an individual's behavior. Thus, all mental "illness" becomes "treatable" by brain-altering psychiatric drugs.

George Engel proposes that "psychiatry's crisis revolves around the question of whether categories of human distress with which it is concerned are properly considered 'disease' as currently conceptualized and whether exercise of the traditional authority of the physician is appropriate for their helping functions."<sup>3</sup> He thinks that there exists a problem logically inherent in medicine in that it defines "disease" in terms of somatic or physical parameters, and doctors are not concerned with psychosocial issues. Historically, there was a distinction made between human behavior and human thought, emotion, and motivation. The latter was attributed to some psychic phenomena, and not necessarily a product of brain function.

The federal government declared the years 1990 to 2000 to be, "The Decade of the Brain." D. Allen Brumley, the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, states that "we have learned more about the brain and nervous system during the last 10 years than throughout all of history..." He asserts that this has been made possible through the "technological revolution occurring in the brain sciences, including the development of powerful microscopes and sophisticated brain imaging devices, new and better animal models, and major advances in the study of genetics."<sup>4</sup> This does sound exciting. However, what we knew about the brain and nervous system prior to ten years ago was relatively unchanged for decades. It has only been within the last ten years that areas of research have developed to study the mechanisms of the brain because of the availability of the aforementioned imaging technology. Even with all of this scientific and technological advancement, brain and behavioral sciences remain a mystery and investigation is still highly experimental. This is especially the case with regard to understanding the brain's chemistry and the use of neuroleptic drugs. According to the biomedical paradigm, the definition of mental illness is understandable through the natural sciences and therefore becomes tangibly treated.

## **Two Opposing Models of Behavior: The Mind/Brain Problem**

Historically, neurologists dealt with cases of disease, injury, and dysfunction as they related to the brain and affected human behavior. The latter distinction between unexplainable behaviors not perceived as directly related to an organic insult or predisposition in the brain led to the evolution of the field of psychiatry. Originally, psychiatrists were designated to be concerned with the psychosocial issues that their patients were affected by. Psychiatrists could implement behavioral therapies to patients mostly based on theories of behaviorism. For a long time, and in the minds of many people today, psychiatry was kept out of the field of medicine.

The mind/brain problem is defined as one that discusses functions of the brain in a dualistic way. The development of areas of study such as cognitive science and cognitive psychology explore the "mind," while neuroscience attempts to understand physiologic and chemical functions of the brain. In reference to the mind/brain problem, sociologist Lester Ward, in *The Psychic Factors of Civilization*, proposes that any "property involves mystery." He uses the following example: "Why the peculiar molecular constitution and arrangement of glycerine should render that substance sweet, or of quinine should render that bitter is as mysterious as that the molecular constitution and arrangement of protoplasm should impart to that substance vital properties, or as that of the organization (and constituent matter?) of the brain should give it the capacity "to know." "

Ideally, human behavior would be better understood if all fields of inquiry contributed to the understanding of the mind/brain. Many psychologists and few psychiatrists believe in an alternative approach to understanding human behavior. This approach involves the recognition that behavior can be understood and must be understood within a social, familial, and cultural context, and that people have control, if they gain awareness of their situation and behavior, to take responsibility for their behavior to some degree. Dr. Peter R. Breggin suggests that questions like, "Where do we go when life seems unendurable and we have little or no hope left? What are our ultimate resources in life – the places and persons to whom we turn for help, direction and inspiration?" (P 9) may be a better place for people to begin than to immediately turn to their physicians in search of a prescriptive "cure."

## **Philosophy and Science:**

### ***The Development of Scientific Authority***

Humans have been studying their own behavior for centuries. The early concepts of how humans thought, felt, and acted were not originally conceived from a physiological explanation. Different cultures throughout human history have created all kinds of imaginative stories to explain behavior. Before there was what we now consider methodological science, there were people making observations about the way people acted and wondering why. Philosophy can be thought of as the fundamental discipline from which all other academic disciplines have developed.

Though philosophy still exists as an academic discipline within universities today, the authority of science is considered superior. More specifically, the "hard" sciences such as biology, chemistry, and physics, reign as the supreme "true" sciences. It can be heard within the corridors and behind closed doors within academic departments in universities that the obvious distinction between Science and the Art, Humanities, and Social Science departments, is that only the "hard" sciences are true science. All those that are seeking "real" answers to the world in which we live in can only succeed with any kind of certainty if the methods of science are implemented and enforced. The "hard" sciences are thought to be superior to the social sciences in that some level of objectivity is believed to be inherent in the deduced conclusions based

on the scientific method. Brunner suggests "it was the separation of the pathological from the normal that allowed psychiatry to claim its academic independence from philosophy, and enable it to establish a regime of scientific truth of its own." <sup>6</sup>

Science is a social process. It is influenced by technology, the economy, and politics. Science is concerned with what can be "known" using standard methods of inquiry that can be repeated. Science must be self-correcting, reliable, and always evolving. A non-scientific method is considered to be one based on the word of someone else or on authority. It may be the case that in the perceived superiority of science today, there lies an illusion that is created by the scientific community, in that they may not see that much of what is considered science becomes truth by the power of authority. This authority relies most stringently on the scientific method. In academic psychology, for example, statistics are an intricate part of this method used to manipulate and display data. Statistics are the golden crown that rests upon the heads of today's experimental psychologists allowing them to advance under the guise of hard scientific truths. Reality forces a different case. The intricate phenomena that is behavior is rarely captured with a standardized measure between one human to the next. It is a wonderful idea optimistically, however, if it were simply as it seems, the brain might have understood itself by now. A paradigm may have authority and drive all research leaving no room for research in other areas, potentially exposing the possible fallacy of that particular paradigm. This can be especially distorting when scientists work under a paradigm that has become a dogma.

It makes little sense to find fault in "science" as a social entity, and a greater sense to see that both academic science and society are made up of individuals who like it or not lapse from reason much more often than they would like to believe. People operate as human beings first. According to Gary Gutting in his book, *Paradigms and Revolutions*, "science is the only generally recognized cognitive authority in the world today." <sup>7</sup> Thomas Kuhn, a philosopher of the nineteenth century, was one of several who attempted to explain the structure of scientific revolutions. Kuhn posits that "science's authority ultimately resides not in the rule-governed method of inquiry whereby scientific results are obtained but in the scientific community that obtains the results" (Gutting). Kuhn believes that scientific theory is developed based on a preexisting paradigm, which is already established and accepted by a scientific community. He thinks that scientific revolutions usually occur outside of the realm of 'normal science' and can create a new paradigm under which new research is performed. Karl Popper, another philosopher of science and a critic of Kuhn suggested that [science] is... a long step from the rejection of psychological idiosyncrasies of an individual to the rejection of common elements induced by nurture in the psychological make-up of the licensed membership of the scientific community."

It may be the case that the above is directly related to the illusion that is created by the scientific community, that it is made up of *individuals* with "personal idiosyncrasies, prejudices and whims." <sup>8</sup> Even though rules are formulated, and methods developed, science is not free from subjective influence. Nor is science free from social

influences or understood aside from social, political, and economic context. Robert Merton wrote on the sociology of science, and based his theory on the idea that there was "a sharp distinction between science as a cognitive system and science as a social system" (Gutting, 9). "Discoveries" made by a community of scientists working within the fields of the brain and behavior under the biomedical paradigm originally acknowledged the therapeutic effects of neuroleptic drugs serendipitously. Drugs used in the 1960s, for example, "had been discovered largely by accident."

### Neurology, Psychology and Psychiatry Sigmund Freud and the Beginning of Psychotherapy

The distinction of pathology as it pertains to the mind, or mental illness, has undergone numerous definitions throughout the centuries. "Normal" becomes the defining point and the beginning of the diagnosis and treatment of those deemed either healthy or mentally ill. This concept of normalcy is so laden with sociological affections and implications that it must be understood as such. "The presupposition of such a clearly demarcated boundary (between normal and abnormal) formed that cornerstone of the European paradigm of psychiatry" (Brunner, 32).

Psychology seems to have taken a back seat to fields of inquiry such as neuroscience and biochemistry in understanding mental health and illness. In Jose Brunner's book, *Freud and the Politics of Psychoanalysis*, he discusses the development of psychoanalysis within a historical context. He uses the word 'politics' to "denote the role that extraneous factors such as class, money, education and professional status play in the origins and constitution of the clinical setting of psychoanalysis" (Brunner, 1995:xi). It seems that several factors influence the decline in academic popularity of psychology. Research requires money to employ assistants and researchers. Economic dynamics and political influences greatly affect this decline.

Mental disease was originally associated with race or ethnicity. The paradigm of neurosis, for example, before Freud, was that of degeneracy. The concept of 'mental degeneracy' introduced by Benedict-Augustin Morel was considered to be "degeneracy which constituted a long-term effect of modernity – especially urbanization and industrialization – whose vices, pressures, demands, speed and noise were said to impose an inordinate burden on the nervous system, lead to fatigue and brought people to seek consolation in drink, sexual perversion or crime" (Brunner, 1995: 5). This "decadence" was thought to be passed through heredity from one generation to the next.

One of the earliest documented cases of mental disorders was hysteria. This disorder has been described by Paul Brigueur as "neurosis of the brain, the manifestation of it consisting chiefly in a perturbation of those vital acts which are concerned with the expression of emotion and passion." This disturbance called hysteria was thought by many American doctors to be the result of overwork and others believed (both in Europe and the United States) that "debauchery and decadence could gain a biological momentum and produce people devoid of moral sense (Brunner, 1995: 6). Though presently claims have been made that scientists have been able to understand the

organic mechanisms of emotion and passion within the brain, these claims are speculative and unsubstantiated.

Sigmund Freud entered the scene and proposed that perhaps there existed a hereditary predisposition for neurosis. Freud blamed the illness on the strict rigidity of the culture or society that people lived in. He believed that individuals' desires were in severe conflict with what *should* be done or what behavior was expected according to societal demands. He didn't believe that hysterics were lacking morals and ethical standards or that they were more likely to be corruptible. He understood neurosis as "taking refuge in an illness." Critics of his model of neurosis have written extensively on Freud's writing, some have criticized it positively, others negatively; and there are those who have critiqued the misinterpretations of the translations of his work. Regardless of the rhetoric, Sigmund Freud was the beginning of what is today called psychotherapy.

Freud's theory of civilization is based on the idea that people sublimate their instincts and that through this process society is an achievable or functioning possibility. This seems to be appropriate to what is happening within the medical sciences and the pharmaceutical industry. He suggests that an instinct which has been inhibited from acting in the form of some behavior as a result of the social pressure of modern culture attempts to find an indirect expression and, when successful in discovering an outlet in harmony with the demands of social opinion, is said to be sublimated. Thus, a conflict arises between what individuals want and what society demands they "should" do.

The pressure from the social environment demands that the individual do what is best for the group as a whole. Thus, Freud, the medical doctor, took on a perspective of a social scientist.

According to Brunner, psychiatrists "obsessed themselves with perfection of laboratory techniques, clinical classification and description without developing adequate therapeutic measures." Thus, Freud's psychosocial approach to mental illness appeared to endanger "the progress of German speaking science of the nervous diseases."<sup>10</sup> However, because Freud's training was originally in neurology "and much of his thinking derived from the evolutionary biology and anthropology of the nineteenth century,"<sup>11</sup> he meant to synthesize both his medical knowledge with his understanding of society and psychology. Roland Littlewood, in his article *Science, Shamanism and Hermeneutics, Recent Writings on Psychoanalysis*, suggests that Freud's contribution was to expand current evolutionary biology's view of mental illness and "add a developmental theory of mental illness." This may be necessary in understanding, in part, why most of academic psychology today is experimental, behavioristic, and generalistic. The use of statistics and strict experimental methods may be psychologists' attempts to gain some state of authority or recognition as a science by natural/biological scientists. The evolution from the biological sciences to the social sciences seems to be one of understanding what is "natural" to what is "normal."

### The Authority of Medicine

American society relies greatly on the authority of science. We look to science as the means to challenge and better our conventional wisdom and propel our culture always toward greater human advancement. People have become reliant on the opinions of "experts," namely scientists. These "experts'" opinions, however, may have a devastating effect on the health of people, if in fact mental illness is defined solely within the biomedical paradigm of the brain and behavior.

Medical doctors fit into the realm of revered experts. Many people rely on their doctor's opinion unquestionably. Research suggests that people may feel intimidated by asking questions of their doctors, even when they have concerns about their health or do not fully understand what their doctors are speaking about. Medical sociologists have supported this claim in studies that suggest that people are not likely to question the authority of their doctors because they may feel intimidated by them. It is my contention that people rely on the "expert" opinions of scientists and the recommendations of medical doctors because they are searching for immediate answers or perhaps avoid having to think for themselves. Doctors, as experts in their field become conduits for the propagation of a drug mentality. The right to prescribe drugs is the great separator between medical doctors and other scientists — the psychiatrists from the psychologists.

The media is the primary forum in our culture for bombarding laymen with the latest scientific claims, and extols the latest "discoveries" by scientists, based on the latest scientific research. Products are marketed claiming to have scientific endorsements. As society becomes more and more cluttered with massive amounts of information and technology enables the mega transmission of all of this information, people depend more on the "expert" information from professionals within a particular field of interest, rather than accurate knowledge regarding a particular matter. Medical doctors are not only revered as infallible, they play an important role in drug propaganda.

People make decisions all of the time based on nothing more than beliefs under the façade of claims by the authority of science. Is science more than just a belief system or another offered religion? All kinds of investments are made in the name of science. Issues of ethics can never be considered something outside of science, because science becomes a social construction and in that, a business. Much of the power of authority of science depends on the faith and reverence of the public, and the power of the public is its money. The drug industry, for example, is a multi-billion dollar business that funds millions of dollars every year in the name of "science." Even the Federal Government grants are funded so that the outcomes will be economically rewarding. Science, in turn, becomes a world steeped in social, political, and economic variables that interact dynamically in the development of scientific authority.

Under the authority of science, the biomedical model of behavior is at least a puzzling one. Its origin and expedient implementation through the drug industry suggests that politics, economics, and academic quality may be in need of inspection and reformation. The facts about what we actually know about the brain are fairly easy to sum up: overall – not much. Similar to the use of electric shock treatments for the mentally ill, we have developed drugs that affect the brain's chemistry in some way that we are still guessing about.

"We have limited knowledge about how a few chemical messengers work (neurotransmitters) but little or no idea as to how they combine to produce brain functions" (Breggin, 1999: 5). However, most psychiatrists, psychologists, and neurologists will acknowledge that they absolutely affect the brain and some may even realize that drug effects may not be positive or even a productive way to induce changes in behavior.

Has science created needs for people that do not actually exist? Medical doctors rely on the use of drugs in order to treat their patients. More recently, however, the availability of certain drugs creates labels for emotional feelings and moods that can be diagnosed as "disorders." The pharmaceutical market is filled with a variety of new medicines. These medicines are advertised in the general public, just as cigarettes, alcohol, and shaving cream are advertised. Drug representatives are recruited and sent out to market door-to-door the latest drugs to doctors in their offices (average beginning drug-rep salaries = \$ 50-60K/yr + all expenses). Medical doctors can receive incentives such as golf outings, vacations, and other fine perks if they prescribe certain brands of prescription drugs.

The first step in the process of treatment is to diagnose a patient. The importance of diagnosis is today more complex because of the influence of HMOs in the health care system. In most cases, if doctors cannot provide a diagnosis code, they will not receive payment. This puts tremendous pressure on medical doctors to diagnose quickly or they may not get the reimbursement from health care companies they think they are entitled. Psychiatrists often diagnose patients, even before they have a definitive understanding of the patient's problem. Multiple diagnosis codes assigned to a patient leads to higher payment for doctors. As more drugs become available to treat specific problems, which are usually reported subjectively by patients, diagnosis code availability broadens.

Perhaps it is the availability of these drugs that encourages doctors to assign a diagnosis that may be based on only one or two symptoms reported by the patient and not on an accurate diagnosis of the patient's problem. "Psychiatric diagnosis has become so widespread that is almost impossible to mention any kind of 'feeling' to a medical doctor without being assigned a psychiatric label and prescribed the latest psychiatric drug" (Breggin, 5). This has created a phenomenon within the field of psychology in which psychotherapy is no longer viewed by most medical doctors as anything other than unnecessary advice, with little more influence on the health of patients than a placebo effect.



## The Development of Psychopharmacological Therapies

The medical model of behavior, where human behavior is controlled by neurophysiological and neurochemical functions, has led to the development of the drug industry. The biomedical model of disease, "assumes disease to be fully accounted for by deviations from the norm of measurable biological (somatic) variables."<sup>12</sup> According to Engel, this model is reductionistic and, "assumes that the language of chemistry and physics will ultimately suffice to explain biological phenomena." The supporters of this model (physicians mainly) have been active in announcing their beliefs that psychosocial influences should be kept outside of the realm of medicine; they should deal only with the "organic elements of disease" (Engels, 129). Psychiatrists presently believe this biomedical model of disease which equates all abnormal behavior, negative (unwanted, uncomfortable) emotional states, all cognitive decline and the most popular of mental disorders today – depression, as a fundamental organic problem within the brain.

Recently, David Satchel, the Surgeon General, released his first report on mental health and mental illness. In his report, the history of psychopharmacological therapies is discussed. This process of drug development is known as "rational drug design," which is the process by which researchers manipulate chemical structures to affect the chemicals in the brain. "Many of the older pharmacotherapies that had been introduced by 1960 had been discovered largely by accident."<sup>13</sup> The Surgeon General's report admits that the "past generation of drugs were introduced on the market long before their mechanism of action was understood." It is still the case today. Drug companies discuss their latest drug research in terms of more selective drugs, or drugs that are specifically designed to target particular mechanisms in the brain, however, knowledge of the brain is so incomplete, that these trials remain only experimental.

There is a fascinating phenomenon today; people can now enter their physician's office and request by name a drug that they think will alleviate their mental or emotional pain. This has become the case due to television and magazine ads to promote psychotropic/neuroleptic drugs for the "treatment" of "disorders" such as social anxiety (feelings of uneasiness and embarrassment). Many people, including doctors, may not realize that they are putting their faith in drug company marketing. The politics are simplistic: drugs are expensive, drugs need good marketing, people are told they need drugs, people buy drugs, drugs make money, money is needed to drive research, doctors are rewarded for prescribing drugs by drug companies.

Patients are unaware that they are really just subjects participating in after market drug trials and that their faith in the FDA is blind. The popularity of drugs such as Prozac (an "anti"-depressant drug) is not surprising, considering the popularity of alcohol, smoking, and illegal drug use. Many people turn to intoxicating substances in one form or another when they are experiencing emotional discomfort and pain. People who feel better on these intoxicating substances "feel better when their brain is impaired, psychiatric drugs are no different" (Beggan, 2). Although the Surgeon

General's report on Mental Health and Mental Illness includes a discussion about the importance of psychological and sociological factors on mental health/illness, the biological factor is the dominant theme of the report and seems to be the prevailing authority throughout academic environments.

### **The Pest of Depression:**

#### ***Poor Citizenship and Social Anxiety***

It is the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the age of technological explosion and refinement, of gluttony and massive materialism, of decadence, "cures," and quick fixes. It is a time when most of what is desired has a price and the pursuit to exterminate or at least intoxicate against pain and suffering supercedes. Forethought, responsibility, and consequence seem to be antiquated phenomena. Popular attitudes reflect ideas that we should live for today, use our resources while we can, and if we do not choose to be aware or conscious about the outcome of such gluttony, it will not matter to the individual. Ignorance is bliss and there is nothing better than not having to take responsibility for individual actions. Although, action is a word that usually implies "will" on some level and perhaps is too strong a word. There are problems when individuals do not think for themselves, when they don't believe that they have a sense of self that can exist aside from socially dictated norms. Are people victims affected by a society that profits at their own expense?

If people are listening to what they are told by society, then are they being told what to feel? The popularity of depression, for example, has risen with the availability of drugs to "treat" these feelings. Which comes first – do people think that they have problems ("illnesses") and look for treatment? Or does society offer the cure and the diagnoses are socially generated? Society may be responsible for the creation of the illness *and* providing the "cure." Not many people like to feel "bad," however, what is feeling "bad" other than what society defines it as? For example, ads marketing drugs for social anxiety asks, "Do you feel nervous in social situations? Do you wish meeting new people wasn't such a painful experience?" – well, pop this pill, which generates numerous kinds of phobias that are classified as neurotic, or abnormal and dysfunctional.

Everyone who doesn't fit society's description of functional can now be "treated." And who defines what is functional versus dysfunctional? In large part it is the scientific community and especially medical doctors. And what more efficient and lucrative way to "treat" people than to have them entering their doctors' offices with the brand name of the drug they know would make them "better" on the tip of their tongues. There exists a dysfunctional dependence on authority. Who is controlling whom?

Indeed it is not the case that the biomedical paradigm has run its course. By no means is this so. However, the behavioral sciences are in desperate need of a shift in perspective. The ways humans think, act, and most relevant, feel, should be continually explored through academic research. Social scientists and natural scientists need

to relate relevant research and enjoy the pursuit of inquiry for reasons of curiosity and inquisitiveness. The exploration is not over, but the reality of research today is that it requires money. Drug companies have enormous revenue to distribute to interested research candidates; it is no wonder this paradigm has gained such momentum.

It is ignorant to think that self-interest doesn't play a role in the academic lives of scientists. When scientists venture to obtain grants to satisfy their research ideas, they act according to their own self-interested research ideas (ideally). Scientists also act self-interested in their desire to make "discoveries," to attach their name to a professional journal, or to be called upon by the public as an "expert" in their field of inquiry.

If the message from society is that feeling a particular way is negative, or that there is such a thing as social anxiety and it is a "disorder" that should be treated with a drug, then the public is getting very disturbing messages. The pressures to conform are becoming increasingly stifling and are indirectly and powerfully controlled by the Food and Drug Administration (the Federal Government) and the economic interests of those who announce and market "legal" drugs propelled by faith in the scientific community. It is an illusion marketed to the public that we actually understand exactly how psychiatric drugs are interacting in the brain and how they influence specific behaviors. Drug research is still highly experimental, although it is presented under the canopy of tested and proven science. Rationality may or may not lead to an understanding of the human brain and behavior. Are we surrendering our lives in the name of science and society?

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'Atta Stuff, Lehigh!



## Media Meets Medea

MEHNAZ CHOUDRY

*"Powerless women have always used mothering  
as a channel—narrow but deep—for their own  
human will to power."*

Adrienne Rich, author

*"Of all the creatures that feel and think,  
we women are the unhappiest species."*

Euripedes' Medea

I have two early memories of my mother. One was of her tying my thick, Beatles-short hair; I remember the teeth of the comb running down my tender scalp and the hot tears which would appear in my eyes when she put rubber hands on two tight braids. Every morning I went through this ritual, and every night it hurt all over again when she took them out. She would have stopped if I had asked her to, but we went through this ritual everyday because this is how I knew my mother loved me. The second memory, which stands apart from all others, is of her hitting me—hard. We were having a dinner party and I was supposedly misbehaving, so she slapped me across the face and told me to act like a lady. I remember feeling small and humiliated but also very angry with her. After screaming "You're a bad mommy!" I ran to my room and cried myself to sleep.

My mother wasn't a "bad" mother, and yes there are such things as "bad" mothers; these mothers are the ones "who neglect their children, abuse them, or fail to provide them with proper psychological nurturance" (Ladri-Taylor and Umansky 1). It is necessary to put the word "bad" in quotes because I agree that this is my definition of a "bad" mother, and a mother who kills fits into this category. But my definition does not agree with the definition of a bad mother often constructed by members of the media or academics, since their judgments are often based on conceptions of what factors make a woman deviant, some not under their control such as "race,

class, age, marital status [and] sexual orientation" (Ladd-Taylor and Umansky 2). We are often led to believe that career moms, lesbian moms, minority moms and teen moms are bad mothers because they fit into our notions of deviant women. This does not mean that if one of these women kills her child we should excuse her crime. I am not attempting in anyway to condone the deaths of numerous children at the hands of their mothers or fathers, but I don't want to fall into the "let's blame mom" trap either. I consider the crime of killing to be wrong, but the crime of killing is not *more* wrong if the victim is a child, or the killer is a mother. What makes such a crime appear so deviant is the fact that by committing violent crimes, especially against their children, women are defying our stereotypical notions that aggression and violence are present only in the construction of males, thus these women defy the status quo by killing.

How can we not be enthralled by women who kill, and why must we vilify them? Other than morbid fascination, the facts themselves are interesting: women who kill are mostly housewives or domestic workers, and often women kill family members while men kill strangers; "more often than not, the person a woman kills is her own newborn" (Ladd-Taylor and Umansky 2). According to Molly Ladd and Lauri Umansky in their book *Bad Mothers: The Politics of Blame*, the killing of a newborn by its mother has happened millions of times throughout history, and the rate of mothers killing their children has actually gone down in the twentieth century bringing such a crime to the media's devouring attention (Caba Salon.com). This would explain our reactions to such crimes; not only are they rare, but books such as psychologist George Reckers' *Susan Smith: Victim or Murderer?*, which describes Susan Smith's killing of her two sons, cater to the image of an evil scheming woman whose worst crime is not the killing of her two sons, but her wearing the mask of our stereotypical definitions of a "good mother" in order to deceive us. Reckers' book is an example of how the media and academics write and present such women who kill as deviant mothers and deviant women. These are the sort of mothers who have decided it isn't their only job to sacrifice their emotional needs and ambitions for the good of the baby. To try to understand this fascination and the "politics of blame" which surround mothers who kill, it is also necessary to explore how violent women are a threat to our conceptions of motherhood and our construction of the feminine.

Annalee Newitz writes in her essay "Murdering Mothers" that some of the fascination comes with our urges to "figure out how to live without children; and perhaps... to live without motherhood as we know it" (334). In a decade where women may put off childbirth till they are middle aged and with the changing landscape of the American family which includes single and gay parents, our definitions of the "good" mother have been challenged (335). Not only do many women not want to raise children the way their parents did, but many do not want the obligations of child bearing and child rearing at all. Listening to the case of Renee Auhon, who after tossing a lit cigarette into the bedroom closet of her two little girls went down the street to watch them burn alive (Pearson 8), or thinking about Susan Smith rolling her two sons into

a lake. I am horrified, fascinated, and amazed by such women, who are making the choice to exist without children and exercising their wishes to be without them.

What makes women feel as if they are being trapped into wanting children? On a physical level, a woman's body "dooms her to the...reproduction of life," while a man's body is supposed to result in cultural artifacts (Ortner 75). Most women are conditioned to accept this view of themselves, and they start to believe that their life is not complete until they have had a child. The attitude that a woman's sole or primary purpose is for child bearing and child rearing particularly shapes how we see violent or aggressive women: "To picture women's aggression, men would have to picture women's bodies bereft of the erotic, the maternal, the divine. Muscle and hormone are the twin pillars upon which all our darkest human urges stand: lust, rage, jealousy, the craving for power, the quest for control" (Pearson 8). Women are mothers who possess these qualities and urges are monsters, witches, or castrating mothers in horror movies, and in our justice system they are often insane and evil.

In October 1994 in Union, South Carolina, Susan Smith accused a black man of car jacking her vehicle with her two sons Michael and Alex strapped to the back seat. Nine days later she confessed to police she had actually left her sons locked in the back seat of the car and tolled it into a lake and had stood there watching the car sink into the water. The media had shown the pretty Smith as a sweet-faced Southern woman who, although young, was seemingly a "good" mother. George Reckers' depiction of Susan tries to answer the question: "Was Smith a suicidally depressed, mentally ill young woman, or a selfish, violent slut?" Dr. Reckers was the "designated spokesperson to the press regarding the mental evaluation procedures relating to the Smith trial" (Reckers cover jacket). Although Reckers has twenty-three years of clinical experience in psychological evaluations, many of his views, especially those concerning female sexual deviancies, are colored by his fanatical Christian beliefs. Reckers quotes several passages from Genesis to show Susan as evil towards the end of his book and hardly provides evidence as to what could have caused her to kill and what can be done to prevent such killings except a deep faith in Jesus and His teachings. While I am also going to try to answer Reckers' question, I am not trying to excuse Susan's crime, since I do not see murder as an expression of love (to the extent that she could explain her crime, Susan said she killed her sons out of love for them, to spare them the pain of a broken home). Unlike Reckers, I would like to see and create reasonable explanations for her crime, for like crimes, and for our attitudes towards "mothers who murder" as opposed to "fathers who murder."

According to Reckers, under the surface Susan was a depressed and evil woman. He describes her in the beginning of his book as being gregarious and sure of herself. She "earned her way to membership in the high school National Honor Society...[and] she was voted 'friendliest girl' for the school yearbook" (Reckers 10). Reckers mentions this fact in two separate places in the book, trying to suggest the murder proves this friendliness was a mask that Susan was using to hide an evil nature and that her ability to deceive was a marker of this evil nature. Reckers' constant use of the word



"evil" sets her up as someone who can't be helped or reformed. What becomes problematic about this attitude is that as a psychologist, Reckers dismisses most of the influences in Smith's life that possibly shaped her. Many of these are, to my mind, the major causes of her decision to kill her sons, especially the repeated abuse by the men in her life. Susan was sexually abused by her stepfather Bev Russell, which many people in her community believed was an excuse used by her to gain sympathy, even though Russell has repeatedly appeared in public admitting to his crime. What can't be denied is the exploitation Susan experienced from the men in her life. Reckers, however, sets these men up in a much more sympathetic light.

It is important to explore how Reckers describes the incestuous relationship between Bev and Susan, because this major un-prosecuted crime is one of the causes of Susan's subsequent criminal behavior. Susan and Bev's abusive "relationship" lasted until perhaps six months before she killed her sons. The abuse started when Susan Smith was fifteen and she had to sleep on the couch for a visiting cousin. Bev was "relaxing on one end of the couch...and Susan crawled into Bev's lap to go to sleep" (Reckers 43). She fell asleep and woke to him touching her breasts but decided to pretend she was asleep through the rest of the night as he fondled her. She told her mother the next morning that she "wanted to see how far he would go." Reckers characterizes her remark as being manipulative and "clearly inappropriate," stating that her crawling into his lap was characteristic of a five-year old rather than a fifteen year-old (Reckers 43). Her action is troubling but can be explained in psychological terms: Susan lost her father at a young age, and he was a man who was very important to her existence. Her behavior later on was characterized by increased promiscuity in school and low self-esteem. She seemed to want confirmation from men, but this neediness was perhaps a reaction to her father's violent, early death. Reckers mentions this but discounts it immediately. In the same breath that Reckers cites her behavior as characteristic of a five year old, he says that it is provocative, setting up Susan's character as that of the "sleeping monster." She is a young girl at only fifteen, but inside her lies a slur who seduced her stepfather as much as he seduced her. Susan couldn't really have escaped the situation or put a stop to it since her mother's pressure to uphold the family reputation caused her to decide to drop her charges. Bev was kept in a position by Susan's mother and the community (child services forced intervention only to a point) to continue to be abusive. I believe that the abuse needs to be seen much more sympathetically and from Susan's point-of-view since she was a young woman when the abuse started, and it was natural for her at this age to want, be curious about, and enjoy sex. Also, if this sex brought her the acceptance she wanted from her stepfather, then it succeeded in providing a replacement for her lost father figure.

Reckers also portrays Susan as a woman who had numerous affairs during her marriage with her husband David, but what he doesn't acknowledge are the feelings of "rejection and the sexual manipulation" she experienced because of these men, which became part of the emotional stress she was carrying with her when she com-

mined her crime. David Bruck, Susan's defense attorney, questioned her ex-lover Tom Findlay about whether Susan was aggressive in regards to their intimate relationship; if she was sexually aggressive in general, if she was sex-crazed, and also if she was driven sexually. Findlay answered "no" to all these questions and said Susan's physical pleasure was a "feeling of being needed, loved, cuddled" (Reckers 54). First, it is important to note that Susan was never questioned on the details of her feelings about her intimate relationships, and she never testified or gave a statement at her trial; rather, we are only getting the point-of-view of her lover and, as I will show later, her husband. Reckers adopts the practice in his book of excluding Susan's feelings on the situation and this continues and adds to the patriarchal oppression Susan has had to experience. Also, because of Reckers' prejudices about Susan, we never really find out if she does enjoy these relationships, and, if so, can they be separated from her self-esteem problems? By doing this, Reckers succeeds in creating a book that allows no sympathy for Susan. Also, Findlay's testimony seems to be included in the book as a part of the author's efforts to show the degeneracy of Susan's character as a woman and mother, yet the testimony Reckers uses seems to suggest that Susan is deserving of our sympathy: her "sexual appetite" according to Findlay was not just for sexual pleasure but a way to find love and affirmation. The necessity to show the degeneracy of Susan's character serves to position her husband David as the "nurturing figure," picking up what should be Susan's "real job."

In the fall of 1994, Susan was working full time at the Winn-Dixie supermarket, had enrolled as a part time student at the University of South Carolina (two courses), was responsible for her two boys and was continuing relationships with three men: her stepfather, her separated husband David, and Tom Findlay, her boss at the store. Reckers writes that according to her husband David's observations "something was being shortchanged in this self-absorbed lifestyle, and that something appeared to be the boys...according to...how frequently she left the boys in other people's care." Again, we are given David's view of Susan and her actions, and although this does have certain negative implications on Susan's character, I still have sympathy for her situation. On the stand, David testified, "My whole life had just been ripped from its frame. I was shell-shocked and grieving, and missing my boys so much. Everything I planned—teaching them to play ball, taking them fishing, teaching them to ride a bike, watching them go to school that first day, watching them grow up—all that has been ripped from me, and I don't know what I'm supposed to do about it" (Reckers 120). This reaction, when compared to Susan's at the time, does show much more compassion for the boys, but David himself was balancing his time between full time work and various affairs. Susan was given the responsibility of bringing "Michael and Alex by to see David at work several times a week," where he "would always be delighted to see his children and played with them each time" (Reckers 16). Nowhere does Reckers indicate that David took the initiative to spend extra time with them and suggests this store playtime as enough interaction with his children. But was David not also short-changing his children as he accused Susan of doing?

These double standards for fathers and mothers, and on a grander scale for men and women, connect to our prejudices surrounding aggression in the sexes and results in different perceptions about parents who kill their children, which vary according to their gender. The evening news is often littered with stories of alcoholic fathers who have a bad day, or of fathers coming home after being fired, who violently abuse or kill their family. These daily stresses are often explored or serve as reasons for fathers who murder, so when a mother is "isolated, and the expectation of perfection [is] that much more intense," or has an "impulsive or volatile personality," how can we not stretch the same privilege to her and not expect her to abuse her children or family, or even kill them? (Pearson 82). The same type of daily influences must be studied, and our reaction should not be to ask, "how did the mother fail her 'natural job?'"

Lastly, in regards to Tom Findlay, Reckers ignores the playboy reputation the rich bachelor had in the community, almost making him a victim in Susan Smith's manipulations to gain a stable life and climb her way to Tom's house and money. Reckers' writes continually that Susan was posing as a victim, a continuation of a lifelong pattern and this writing is a common phenomenon in the media: his view of Susan's relationship with Tom shows the constructs of male fear against women who appear sexually powerful or who use sex for their own means. It is true that Susan may have seen "Findlay as her ticket out of the working class" (Reckers 69), but we must remind ourselves that Susan was a young twenty-year-old living in an area where it was common for women her age not to have completed college and to have children in marriages that happened much too early. Reckers does not make allowances for the natural urges Susan may have had to get out of Union, South Carolina. Instead, he claims she supposedly "developed an evil pattern of deception and manipulation to gratify her emotional pleasures. This set her on a tragic collision course with her responsibilities to care for the well-being of her children" (Reckers 69).

It would make more sense to ask not whether Susan was evil or insane, but how the lack of responsibility displayed by the system, her family, her community, and even Susan caused the deaths of Michael and Alex. By framing Susan's crime as incomprehensible, Susan as beyond comprehension and exonerating everyone else in her life, we make her monstrous and beyond reform and we ignore the responsibilities of others. As soon as Smith confessed, she was dubbed evil by the nation, especially women. I remember seeing signs carried by many saying she should be killed herself, or drowned the way she had drowned her boys; a very angry woman on NBC's *Today Show* felt she should be tortured by constantly having to view images of her sons in her jail cell. But in an even more twisted case of murder committed by the father, I found the media to be much more sympathetic, so sympathetic there was almost no coverage for the case. COURT TV told the story of Ronald L. Shanabarger from Franklin, Indiana who had plotted to "punish" his wife Amy for keeping already made vacation plans and not comforting him when his father died. Shanabarger planned to marry her, impregnate her, let her bond with the infant and then kill it.

He wrapped his baby's head in a plastic bag, which choked him to death. His wife came home but since she worked later than her husband, she figured the baby, Tyler, was asleep and found his body in the morning. COURT TV says Shanabarger confessed because "visions of his son's flat and purplish face from rigor mortis" drove him to (COURT TV). They also reported that the *Indianapolis Star News* quoted a Delaware doctor as saying, "a lot of times people say this or that crime was just too complicated of a plan to be anything other than a sign of pure wickedness. But science would say otherwise, that this man was delusional and you have to wonder about his overall mental state, his mental capacity." In the case of Susan Smith, many said she committed the crime for revenge against her husband David, and far from excusing her as "delusional," the media and psychiatrists dubbed her evil. (I believe though, that since so many men had abused her, her crimes were a means of exacting revenge against men in general). We have created a double standard of labeling the female parent evil while the calculated and much colder revenge-killing of an infant committed by a male parent (Shanabarger) is explained as "delusional."

What did the media consider truly wrong with Susan's crime and her confession afterwards? In the case of Shanabarger, the newspaper also wrote that he confessed after seeing his son's face contorted and blue from rigor mortis, but Smith lied and didn't seem sad enough considering her children had just died. Andrea Peyser writes in *Mother Love, Deadly Love: The Susan Smith Murders*:

that Smith's self-interested public statements reveal her true homicidal personality: Aside from briefly recounting the car jacking, Susan used her first few minutes of fame to discuss the main subject of her mind: Susan. "I can't even describe what I'm going through. I mean my heart is-it just aches so bad. I can't sleep, I can't eat, I can't do anything but *think about them*..." There was Susan, dwelling upon her own feelings of inadequacy. Her first five sentences began with the word I. This could be understandable, under the circumstances. But many a mother within earshot might wonder why a woman who'd just seen her sons stolen before her eyes would choose to talk mostly about herself (Newitz 338).

Peyser's "connection between homicidal pain and rage and a woman's desire to express her feelings," is reminiscent of Reckers' judgment of Susan (Newitz 333). Like Reckers, Peyser states that Susan "should focus all her attention on her children," implying "a good mother never begins her sentences with 'I'...[and] should utterly efface her selfhood and speak only of her children" (Newitz 333). Reckers' and Peyser's writing shows us that on one hand "...pain and rage, are staples of human emotion, as is a desire to have and project a personal identity" but we will not allow murdering mothers room for a "mother's emotions and selfhood because these women seem to have power over life and death of their families" (Newitz 338). Shanabarger was so moved by his son's body that he confessed, but are we now sup-

posed to forget he planned to revenge his sorrow by purposely impregnating his wife in order to kill the infant later?

One reason for Susan's portrayal as evil and insane can be blamed on Susan's lawyers, who set up their argument to reflect her instability during and after the crime, stating she had disassociated herself from the crime and was beyond grief. The prosecution stated that she acknowledged her boys provided her with unconditional love, but she has also said she wished she never had Michael and Alex in the first place. Susan might not have wanted these boys anymore since they would be a burden to the lifestyle of most twenty-year olds. This is not an example of her evilness or insanity but shows the lack of responsibility Susan felt towards her children. It is also necessary to consider Susan's early sexual abuse and the lack of responsibility on her mother and her stepfather's part. It is imperative we consider the influences that may have shaped Susan to commit such a crime, since these can be used to prevent such crimes again.

What was wrong with Susan's lawyers' strategy of invoking Susan's mental instability? This defense caters to the stereotype that women are prone to hysteria and nervous breakdowns, while men are known for showing restraint and reason. Susan's behavior after the crime was not of a woman insane but sociopathic or psychopathic. Reckers uses the word insane because this word is so often associated with women and can be applied to mothers since, as stated before, mothers are really insane monsters under their nurturing masks. According to Pati Pearson (*When She was Bad*), a psychopath displays consistent behaviors such as "pathological lying, short attention span, manipulative(ness), remorselessness and an absence of fear." Not only could there be a lack of compassion but more importantly a lack of reaction, and this is not insane or evil, but a highly intelligent behavior, almost a talent. How is this important in our construction of the mother? It isn't a "mask of sanity" that these mothers have adopted, but a mask of our cultural notions of motherhood and femininity. This is a form of oppression that has dire results in the courtroom.

Susan Smith is not unlike Medea who took the lives of Jason's sons in Euripides' play; both are mothers who act "strategically aggressive, using their children" for their naturally ambitious or punishing purposes; in Medea's case, killing was used to punish her husband for leaving her and, on a larger scale, to revenge all men for betraying women (Pearson 102-103). Medea projects "her power into the masculine world—to remind men, as it were, that *women* have control over life and death itself" (Pearson 103, emphasis added). Susan's act is ruthless because, like Medea, she uses her children as pawns: they are useless to her but useful to the patriarchy, so to exercise power she killed her sons. Both Medea and "Smith tipped off their own masks, and in so doing called into question the 'naturalness' of a woman's desire to mother" (Newitz 340). When Medea and Susan are called insane and evil, and more specifically when Susan is also explained as being "young and dumb," we are setting up questionable standards for mothers for what we consider deviant and where they have failed.

So what is our preoccupation with mothers who kill in the news? "A considerable portion of what we call 'news' is devoted to reports about deviant behavior and its consequences," and they command our attention because of some psychological perversities of the mass audiences, but "at the same time, they constitute one of our main sources of information about the normative outlines of society:" a sort of 'public scaffold' (Erikson 13). We aren't just prosecuting mothers who kill, but setting impossibly high standards by which we judge all mothers: career moms, teen moms, and also surrogate moms such as nannies. The Nanny Murder trial in Cambridge, Massachusetts is an example of how the media presents us with different types of mothers who failed to do their 'jobs.' Nineteen-year-old Louise Woodward was found guilty of second-degree murder in the death of eight-month old Matt Eappen when she supposedly shook him for making too much noise. Many felt his mother Deborah Eappen should have stayed home instead of working three days a week since "she could afford to" and not have hired a nineteen-year-old as a nanny (Coontz). Louise Woodward isn't a mother but what can be called a mother figure, or "surrogate mother," where she was helping a mother perform some of her duties. Woodward/Eappen's 'motherhood' was eerily vilified in the manner that Smith's motherhood was vilified. The prosecution showed her as being a "bad girl," who was an "out-of-control teenager armed with a fake ID whose late-night escapades left her unable to perform her duties professionally" (Mackeen). According to the defense, Deborah Eappen, on the other hand, was neglecting her family and wanting too much as a career mom, because her physician husband was already making enough money for them to be well off. Lauri Umansky (*Bad Mothers*) feels that not only is Louise being held to high standards for a worker, but to impossibly high standards for a mother. "She's supposed to be good in the same way mothers are self sacrificing, absorbed in the kids, never tired, never fed up. It's not considered proper for someone who's caring for children to be out there in the thick of social, sexual night life, to have a fake ID, to stay out late" (Mackeen).

What can be learned from the Susan Smith and Nanny Murder trials and our reactions to them? They show us how the media "taps into real anxieties about the dilemmas of contemporary parenting, especially the double minds and contradictory messages faced by mothers" (Mackeen). Asking why teen mothers or Susan Smith didn't just give their children up to caring women is unreasonable; we cannot expect women to make "gifts" of their children to other women, because this nation has isolated its Susan Smiths as Medea was isolated in Corinth. Also as Pearson writes, many women do not want to admit they are a failed example of the "glorious mother-figure" that American society has set up and thus take what appears to be an easier way out by killing their children.

The trials also tell us that mothers and women who take care of children need "help at the individual and institutional level, in adjusting" to the stresses of work-life, home-life, and mother-life (Coontz). Most importantly, when a mother fails, we mustn't "measure out her guilt or innocence, but figure out how to broaden the path

to success for" all types of families (Coontz). We often view the mothers who kill as deserving of extreme punishment (death penalty), but only in cases where the mother has fooled us, by causing us to pity her with stories of lost, or kidnapped, stolen babies, do we punish severely. But our attitudes are just as damaging: she, in our minds, has failed our image of women as nurturing souls, and of course she has failed as a mother figure. What the life sentence of Susan Smith (and the initial life sentence handed down to Louise Woodward) shows us is "how limited our vocabulary of motive is for women, and [our] struggle to describe their aggression in tortuous terms [is] as if [we are] speaking a foreign language, [but] not one rich with literature about violence, morality, and crime" (Pearson 45). We need to create homogenous standards of aggression, and if women are naturally non-aggressive, the violent behavior men exhibit needs to be curbed or raised to the higher level of non-violence. By calling crimes like Susan Smith's evil or the result of insanity, we are reducing many women's crimes to trivial cases of female hysteria instead of recognizing them as expressions of true rage and violence.

When I spoke of my mother hitting me in order to get me to behave in the beginning of the paper, I know many people who have heard the anecdote or will read it will be bothered. I did forget to mention that a friend and I were rough-housing near the kitchen stove when there was still cooking going on, had been stealing food from the already set table, and had set up our dolls under the dining table complete with the stolen desserts. "Act like a lady!" was a common line of my mother's, and she only hit me when completely frustrated, for example, when I was playing near a hot stove after being told countless times not to, or stealing food from a party table. Newitz (*Murdering Mothers*) asks us to separate our reactions into 'emotional' and 'moral' categories: I will acknowledge morally that hitting may be wrong, but on an emotional level I understand what my mother did. I can understand frustration, anger, and lashing out, and in the case of Susan, I can see myself in a small Southern town, not yet twenty-five, and feeling forced to do what she did. If she had killed her lover, her stepfather, or her husband, would we have made Susan Smith as infamous as Medea? No, because Smith is a woman who has chosen to exist without children, and this crime is heinous to the patriarchy because it embodies the maternal philosophy of Adrienne Rich: "The power of the mother... is to give or withhold survival itself." Motherhood is not a natural condition for women, and should not be called such because "something about motherhood" made my mother want to slap me, as it made Susan kill. If we naturalize motherhood, we must naturalize feminine aggression and therefore a mother's right to kill her children.

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## Corporate Elites: Virtuous or Vicious?

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As we enter the new millenium, one thing is certain: politics is on the minds of fewer and fewer people. The portion of modern day society that engages in the workings of Washington, and actively enters into debate, is limited to wealthy corporate elites and powerful interest groups. It is no great surprise to discover that many Americans are frustrated with the "partisan politics as usual" atmosphere that now pervades the nation's capital. Moreover, the presentation of politics and policy-making in the media, ranging from television to literature, has expressed similar feelings. The delineation of politics is passing through a distinct revisionist phase, reflecting this atmosphere of doubt and skepticism that has developed in the world. Rising levels of distrust about American political institutions have been provoked by the failure of elites to address public discontent about the role of money and media in campaigns and the reappearance of political corruption. It often seems that Washington is unable to implement any policy that is not dictated by powerful interests.

We all know that politics is much more than government; instead, it involves all relationships of power, whether they be economic, social, or cultural. Politics is much broader than what goes on in government and is powerfully shaped and constrained by the dynamics of our economy. When this is understood, it is difficult to be satisfied with a definition of democracy confined to the presence of elections and formal rights. When elites rule in their own narrow interests, as they do in the United States, the result is oligarchy, not democracy. Aristotle first provided the formula for identifying whether a government is really a democracy because he recognized that "the real ground of difference between oligarchy and democracy is poverty and riches. It is inevitable that any constitution should be an oligarchy if the rulers under it are rulers by virtue of riches." In all, if the mechanism for their rule is called "democracy," it is nothing more than a democratic façade.

The notion of the democratic façade is the central thesis of Donald Bartlett's and James Steele's text entitled *America: Who Stole the Dream?* In essence, the work is meant to illustrate that American politics and policies are dominated by the corporate hegemony instead of the citizenry. As a result, the legislation that is proposed

and adopted is meant to secure the position of the wealthy even if it poses a major threat to the security of the mass populous and *their* American Dream. Although the scope of this work on the grand-scale is unfathomable, Bartlett and Steele cite three major themes to elucidate the implications of our "corrupt" policy-making — 1) the virtually nonexistent middle class, 2) the foreign dominance and 3) the detrimental globalization scheme.

The notion of "social class" is the great unmentionable in American politics. However, American institutions and the products of those institutions reflect and perpetuate an unmistakable class system. When we look around these days it is not hard to believe that the once admired middle-class American is no longer. This middle-class "squeeze" represents one of the major themes of Bartlett and Steele's work. They comment that "the shifting profile of a few people who have more and more and ever-increasing numbers of people of who less and less poses on the single greatest social and economic threats to American life . . . This is not the American dream . . . [but the] American reality." Thus, we see that corporate power is of more than academic interest. Such concentrated power has wrought a profound transformation in the American economy, a transformation that deeply affects the quality of life of the American people and the degree of control they are able to exercise over their destinies.

The appearance of this concentrated and dominant sector in the economy represents a remarkable change, not only in the organization of capitalism but in the degree to which private business decisions affect the public well being. The direction of economic life today is no longer the products of millions of transactions among thousands of firms operating through an impersonal marketplace. Rather, the main directions of economic life, and thus of social life in general, are a product of the planning processes of the great corporate firms and rests in the hands of relatively few people who sit in executive offices and boardrooms. Decisions made by the executives and owners of the great corporations have more direct and lasting effects upon the quality of life of Americans than any other set of decision-makers. Bartlett and Steele use clichés such as "have-mores and have-lesses" as well as statistics showing unequal income distribution and a concentration of wealth in the corporate sector as evidence for their assertion that corporate policies have caused the extinction of the middle class. For the impartial observer, this is a bitter pill to swallow because it most clearly exemplifies the interests of the corporate hegemony over the will of an entire citizenry. Americans often pride themselves on being members of the largest, most enduring, and most successful democracy in the world. Yet their lives, to a great degree, are channeled, shaped, and determined by the decisions of a very few people sitting in the boardroom and executive suites of corporations, over whom they exercise no control. "It appears as if the corporation fits very uncomfortably into *any known conception of democracy.*"

A second major theme in Bartlett and Steele's work centers around the growing percentage of people inhabiting U.S. soil that are immigrants. Whereas many people

are proud to live in this "cultural melting pot" and want our borders to be open to all those who want to stake a claim to the American Dream, the authors criticize foreign immigrants and place the suffering of millions of Americans on their backs. The work offers the general isolationist position in that they want a giant moat built around the U.S. mainland. A multitude of negative effects, caused by unlimited immigration, are introduced to substantiate the authors critique as well as saddening stories of everyday Americans in hopes of humanizing the problem and convincing the reader. For example, Bartlett and Steele blame immigration for American job losses, decreased wages and benefits for workers, and the destruction of the American Dream for millions and millions of citizens.

Upon carefully analyzing their thesis and its supporting evidence, I assert that this scenario lacks all merit. Not only have Bartlett and Steele failed to recognize the legal immigrants who have waited months, if not years, to become citizens, but they also fail to accurately define this very complicated issue. Primarily, they fail to acknowledge that there are two separate kinds of jobs that must be considered when objectively analyzing this issue – 1) low paying jobs and 2) decent to high wage jobs. For those jobs that do not provide substantial earnings and are undesired, such as fast food workers, babysitters, nursing home attendants, etc., one should thank the immigrants for providing a stable work force in these service industries. Although they may be "low-class" jobs that many Americans are unwilling to take on, we must recognize that immigrants gladly take on these jobs and provide the services that some Americans yearn to take advantage of. On the other hand, immigrants provide fierce competition for the high paying professional jobs. What the authors do not elucidate is that the foreign immigrants are a necessity in our capitalistic economic system.

By its very nature, capitalism requires competition, not only in terms of the final product, but also in the workforce that provides the product. Thus, if a technician from India or China has the intellectual tools to work for a company, then he or she has every right to compete with competent Americans for the job. Bartlett and Steele are not incorrect in their research of statistics, but they take the wrong approach when it comes to dealing with the issue. Where they quickly and relentlessly blame immigrants who consider it a blessing to come to America, maybe they should point to the real causes of this problem – the hubris of some Americans and the incompetence of others.

Thus far I have analyzed two of the central themes in *America: Who Stole the Dream* and have taken drastically different positions, one in support of Bartlett and Steele and the other that directly contradicts their assertions. Once again in the third topic, which centers around the detrimental effects of globalization, I wholeheartedly agree with them. For most of the world's people, the "New World Economy" is a disaster that has already happened. Those it hurts can not escape it nor can they afford to accept it. Many years ago, the North American Free Trade Agreement was widely regarded as a definite policy, but the near defeat of NAFTA revealed pervasive

popular doubt about the wisdom of an unregulated international market. NAFTA became a symbol for an accumulation of fears and angers regarding the place of working people in the New World Economy.

The North American economic integration that NAFTA was intended to facilitate is only one aspect of a rapid and momentous historical transformation from a system of national economies toward an integrated global economy. New information, communication, transportation, and manufacturing technologies, combined with tariff reductions, have made it possible to coordinate production, commerce, and finance on the world scale. This transformation has also had devastating consequences, many of which are explored in Bartlett and Steele's work. For example, the recent quantum leap in the ability of transnational corporations to relocate their facilities around the world in effect makes all workers, communities, and countries competitors for these corporations' favor. The consequence is a "race to the bottom" in which wages and social and environmental conditions tend to fall to the level of the most desperate. This dynamic underlies U.S. deindustrialization, declining wages, and downward pressure on social spending and investment; it is also largely responsible for the migration of low-wage, environmentally destructive industries to poor countries like Mexico and China.

Moreover, as each work force, community, or country seeks to become more competitive by reducing its wages and its social and environmental overheads, the result is a general downward spiral in incomes and social and material infrastructures. Lower wages and reduced public spending means less buying power, leading to stagnation, recession, and unemployment. This dynamic is aggravated by the accumulation of debt; national economies in poor countries and even in the United States become geared to debt repayment at the expense of consumption, investment, and development.

Globalization has also created a much more significant polarization of the "haves and have-nots" both within and between countries around the world. Poor U.S. communities boast world-class unemployment and infant mortality. Meanwhile, tens of billions of dollars a year flow from poor to rich regions of the world, in the form of debt repayment and capital flight. Furthermore, national governments have lost much of their power to control their own economies. The ability of countries to apply Keynesian techniques in pursuit of development, full employment, or other national economic goals has been undermined by the power of capital to relocate virtually overnight. Governmental economic power has been further weakened by neo-liberal political movements that have dismantled government institutions for regulating national economies. In sum, globalization has reduced the power of individuals and communities to shape their own destinies. Contrary to rosy media accounts about the alleged virtues of the North American Free Trade Agreement, Bartlett and Steele profoundly question the conventional wisdom that places support for "free trade" at the level of an unassailable truth. As we have seen, global economic engagement is far

from a monolithic panacea for our economic ills. In light of Bartlett and Steele's work, we must resist the pressure from corporate elites and not succumb to the glorified ideals of a global village when in fact we know that the result is a global pillage.

Each and every one of us have seen or witnessed the strong frustration carried by some in terms of American politics. Moreover, there is a growing sense of helplessness in the American citizenry that can be captured simply by the title of Bartlett and Steele's work, *America: Who Stole the Dream*. Although I did not agree with one of their cultural assertions, i.e. that of immigration as a problem, I applaud the writers for taking the time to work for the average citizen and disillusion the American conscience. However, I do not think the authors wanted their readers to be quietly disillusioned; instead, their message of monumental implication should serve as an inspiration to question our leaders' motives and demand truthful answers. Although the text is comprised of hundreds of pages and countless examples, there is one universal theme that serves as its cornerstone – American politics exemplifies the victory of corporate elites and powerful interests over the average American. Thus, we come to the summation of Donald Bartlett and James Steele's *America: Who Stole the Dream* – when elites rule in their own narrow interests, as they do in the United States, the result is oligarchy, not democracy. The mechanism for their rule is called "democracy," but it is merely a *democratic façade*.



## A Species of Religion: Philosophy and Evolution

VISHAL PATEL

Two respected philosophers, David Hull and Michael Ghiselin, have each defended versions of what is called species individualism or the individuality thesis. Species individualism identifies species taxa by their characters of being natural, innate, or unaided. Both Ghiselin and Hull provided individualism as an alternative view to essentialism for classifying species taxa. Essentialism classifies species according to their essences. According to David Hull, individualism identifies species taxa of organisms to be individuals. If one were to say that a certain species are individuals they would mean that that species is part of a larger classification category. According to Michael Ghiselin, individualism states that species are logical. Ghiselin insists that individuals do not have instances, as classes do; they have parts. Since, species are logical individuals their names can function like the proper names of particular things.

He (Ghiselin) suggested that a species does not have the ontological status of a class but that of an individual, or a particular thing. Species are not classes, because species have no instances, but only parts or constituents. They are individuals, or singular beings, because they are spatio-temporally bounded entities; consequently, we can designate them but we can't define them, and they are therefore properly labeled by proper nouns. (Gayon 1996, 217)

However, Hull and Ghiselin's individuality thesis faced much criticism from authors like David Stamos. Stamos didn't agree with the idea of understanding species by making an analogy to organisms, when one can make species analogous to language.

Organisms are unique. When an organism ceases to exist, numerically that same organism cannot come into existence again. For example, if a baby were born today who was identical in every respect to Adolf Hitler, including genetic makeup, he still would not be Adolf Hitler. ... But the same

observation can be made with respect to species. If a species evolved which was identical to a species of pterodactyl save origin, it would still be a new, distinct species. (Hull 1978, 305)

However, I propose a more practical analogy that could be made with species. David Stamos' criticism of the individuality thesis through an analogy of the species concept to language is not as proficient as an analogy of the species concept to religion.

Stamos' species-language relationship does not demonstrate the fact that species are comprised of a collection of individuals as accurately as the species-religion relationship. If species were understood by an analogy to religion, this comparison would be distinguishable. Certain religions are collectively based upon pre-existing religions. For example, the Sikh religion is an example of convergence because it is composed of contributions from two pre-existing religions, Hinduism and Islam. If these two religions had not come about, then the Sikh religion also may not have been existent. The same can be said about species, certain conditions must be present in order for a new species to evolve. Species are collectively composed of individuals. A type of vertical evolution can be imposed when speaking of new species evolving from pre-existing species. Vertical evolution is often considered to be absolutely meaningless. However, Jonathan Losos's following statement necessitates that biologists and philosophers accept a vertical species concept.

The revolution in comparative biology that occurred over the past 15 years stemmed from two related developments. In the early 1980s, a number of workers argued that macroevolutionary phenomena can be interpreted only in an explicitly historical context... Shortly thereafter, workers realized that as a result of shared ancestry, species are not statistically independent entities; consequently, statistical analyses of comparative data are invalid unless phylogenetic information is incorporated... The result is that workers in all fields of biology are now aware that phylogenetic information must be incorporated into any comparative study that investigates causal hypotheses. The number of journal articles that incorporate phylogenies has increased substantially, not only in those journals devoted to evolutionary issues but also in journals such as *Animal Behavior*, *Ecology*, and *Development*. (Losos 1996, 259)

Another reason why it is better to compare species to religion rather than language is that you can only belong to one religious affiliation, much like species. An individual organism can only belong to a certain species. Organisms can not belong to two different species. For example, a dolphin swims as if it's a fish and looks like a fish from the outside; however, it is classified as a mammal and not a fish, since it bears mammalian characteristics such as lungs used for respiration. Although, it seems



like dolphins, along with porpoises and whales, should be classified as both fish and mammals, it is only allowed to be a member of one category, that being mammals. On the contrary, other organisms are given highly distinct characteristics that enable them to be easily identified with a certain species. Ravens, robins, blue jays, doves, and pigeons, for example, are all given a visibly distinguishable feature of bearing wings that undoubtedly places them in a specific bird category. Evolution has cleverly bestowed them all with wings so there is no question as to which one species they all belong to. Even when it comes to birds there arises a discrepancy with bats. The bat is considered to be a mammal because of its mammalian-like internal organs. Even though it looks like a bird, it can not be classified as both a mammal and a bird. Each organism belongs to its own species category.

Similar to how organisms can not belong to more than one species, people can not belong to more than one religion. For example, you are either a Catholic or a Hindu; you can not claim membership to both religious affiliations. Beliefs may conflict between two religions, thus, you can not say you belong to religion x and say that you also belong to religion y that practices beliefs that conflict with religion x. For instance, let us say that religion x, Christianity, believes that once a soul dies it is passed onto the next realm of heaven or hell. Whereas, religion y, Hinduism, believes that once a soul dies it is not passed onto another realm rather that it is reincarnated into another organism's soul. One can not belong in both of these religions, since they occupy conflicting beliefs. Often at times, certain religions prohibit followers of its faith from being disloyal by belonging to another religious affiliation, and sometimes their faith may even ask them to look down upon other pervading religions.

One can not simultaneously belong to more than one religious affiliation, like an organism can not simultaneously belong to more than one species. This unique relationship between species and religion is not seen in Stamos' species and language analogy. One can belong to more than one language group. Speaking more than one language is quite common throughout the world. In fact, I myself am bilingual but I only belong to one religious affiliation, and I am only a member of one species category. This is one instance where Stamos' argument of the species-language relationship does not hold its ground when compared with a species-religion relationship. My analogy between species and religion illustrates a point that Stamos' analogy fails to uphold, in addition my analogy also sustains all of the analogies Stamos makes between species and language in chapter four of *Species Problem*.

Religions are also similar to species because they too are capable of convergence and divergence. However, cladistics is limited since it fails to illustrate convergence. An example of convergence of Hinduism and Islam contributing to the Sikh religion was previously mentioned. The Sikh religion is composed of contributions from two other pre-existing religions of Hinduism and Islam. The Sikh religion may not have come about if these two religions were not previously prevalent. On an evolutionary tree the Sikh religion would be represented by the intersection of two lines, where the two lines symbolize Hinduism and Islam.

Species and religion are also capable of divergence. When people move from place to place, religions also move along with them. Similarly, as organisms move from habitat to habitat, the entire species migrates with them. With time, species steadily diverge and this divergence is commonly illustrated by a cladogram. If one carefully looks at a cladogram, you may notice that once the branches separate they never reconnect, or converge again. According to David Stamos, it is believed that a common ancestor of modern humans and chimps once diverged in the distant past. This is also true for religion. For example, Russian Orthodox and Ukrainian Orthodox both diverged from a common religion of Greek Orthodox. On a cladogram the religions of Russian Orthodox and Ukrainian Orthodox would be represented by the branching of two lines from a single point, where the single point symbolizes the Greek Orthodox religion. David Stamos fails to make these points regarding convergence and divergence in his species-language analogy. The species-religion analogy successfully upholds these points in addition to the points made by Stamos in his species-language analogy. There is also an analogy that can be drawn from the number of individuals that belong to a religion and the number of individuals that belong to a species. The larger the number of individuals that belong to a religion, the more the variation that can be found within the religion. Similarly, the greater the number of individuals that are included in a species, the more variation is present amongst the species.

Stamos' species-language analogies do not make very strong claims. Stamos claims that language, like species, also has certain ambiguities in its evolution. This is a very general claim made by Stamos. Everything has certain ambiguities involved somewhere in its line of evolution, whether it be species, language, religion, politics, etc. For example, the teachings of Hinduism are interpreted in more than one way by different groups of people in various parts of the world. This claim made by Stamos is not exclusive to the species-language relationship; it is also upheld by my species-religion analogy in addition to Stamos' other species-language parallelisms.

In addition to Stamos' claim that language and species have certain ambiguities, his analogy that language, like species, also evolves is not a very strong claim. "Languages, on the other hand, evolve. In fact it was the analogy between species and languages-and not any analogy between species and organisms-that played the most important role in the development of Darwin's theory of species evolution" (Stamos 258). This is a very general claim because it also can be applied to other topics, such as humans, religion, or politics. Religious beliefs and practices have evolved over time with the change of the family structure. Many religious beliefs and rituals are no longer practiced as time goes by, since families find themselves too busy with work. In addition to upholding Stamos' other species-language analogies, the species-religion analogy can also be made with evolution. Thus, demonstrating how Stamos' claim of species and language being analogous to evolution is not exclusive to the species-language relationship.

David Stamos' analogy of language becoming extinct, much like how species become extinct, is also a weak argument. Stamos gives Latin as an example of a language that has undergone extinction. This is not completely true because to undergo extinction the entire language must be abolished and not spoken or used anymore. In order to undergo extinction, a certain species disappears absolutely and totally from the face of the Earth, without any chances of coming back. Latin is a language that is not readily spoken today, but it is still used in certain places. Latin scripture is typically etched into historical monuments. Latin is also readily spoken in high school and college classrooms where it is taught as a subject. Thus, Latin does not quite exhibit Stamos' analogy in extinction, as does the species category. Even if one did believe that species like languages were capable of returning once they were extinct, you could also apply the analogy of extinction to religions also. Religions can also become extinct and after many years make a return appearance. Once again Stamos' extinction analogy to species and language is neither a very strong nor an exclusive argument. The species-religion relationship upholds Stamos' extinction analogy along with the other species-language analogies he makes in *Species Problem*.

Religion is also a better comparison to species because it too illustrates punctuated equilibria of growth. Contradictory to Darwin's initial assumptions that species evolved by gradual evolution, a new and justifiable theory of species evolving by punctuated evolution replaced Darwin's theory. The gaps in the fossil record were left unexplained according to Darwin's theory of gradual evolution. However, this new theory of punctuated evolution explained that the gaps in between the transitional fossils were due to a stabilization of species.

"One of the major criticisms of Darwin's view, however, a criticism that he faced and which continues to this day, is that the fossil record fails to support this contention. Darwin called this "probably the gravest and most obvious objection which can be urged against my theory" (p.280). Instead of providing us with a plethora of transitional forms, the fossil record is full of gaps, and the transitional forms that have been found are comparatively rare" (Stamos 234-235).

Religion is also much like the punctuated evolution of species in that it also changes over a certain number of generations and then stabilizes to remain fairly constant for a short span of time. For instance, the practices of Hinduism remained fairly constant during the early half of the last century. However, during the latter half of the century, the lifestyles of Hindu followers started to change. With the need for money for family support, more and more Hindu followers were becoming too busy with work and did not find enough time to practice Hindu beliefs and rituals. Thus, the religion of Hinduism, after a period of stability, has been changed to be less demanding of its followers. This illustrates a punctuated evolution of religion similar to that of the species punctuated evolution.

Stamos' species-language analogy does not demonstrate punctuated equilibria. Language is more like gradual evolution because it gradually goes through transitions. For example, the English language started with what is known to be Old English, gradually transformed into Middle English, and again gradually transformed into Modern English. There are no distinct cut-off points where, for example, Middle English ends and Modern English begins; it is just one large transition. The species-religion relationship based on punctuated evolution is not seen in Stamos' species-language relationship. The species-religion analogy, yet again, demonstrates a claim that Stamos' species-language analogy fails to make, and in the process the species-religion relationship still upholds the other species-language relationships Stamos has claimed in Chapter four of *Species Problem*.

Species evolve...however, religions also evolve. All of the previous reasons offer explanations for accepting species to be analogous to religion. Furthermore, these analogies of species with religion are far more proficient than David Stamos' analogy of species with language. Thus, why does Stamos provide an analogy between species and language? Comparing species with religion, rather than language, allows for supplementary analogies to be created along with sustaining Stamos' analogies that were made in Chapter four of *Species Problem*. This species and religion analogy provides yet another criticism towards the individualistic theory of Michael Ghiselin and David Hull.

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## Other World Journeys

STEPHANIE NELSON

*I have a feeling I was sent to the Earth world  
to put my hand on its shoulder and shake it and say:  
"Hey, world, don't look down. . . ."*

(Finster 1982: 66)

Finster uncendingly charms me with this quote from his book, *Howard Finster's Vision of 1982. 200 Lightyears Away Space Born of Three Generations From Earth to the Heaven of Heavens*, a story of encounters with other planets and beings, messages sent back to Earth decoded by their 'sintist(scientist),' and the final encounter with Paul and Jesus Christ on the way into the final destination – Heaven of Rest.

If I so desired, I could also scribble out *Stephanie Nelson's Vision of 200 Lightyears Away* and not type it, and additionally, not care if it makes any sense. Why should we hold Howard Finster's book as special enough to write a five page paper on it which is worth 25% of my final grade for an academic class, and further, to spend a good chunk of time reading and thinking about Planet Snauserio and the Finster gang's adventures in space?

A few lines sprinkled throughout the book jump out at me and echo in my memory – one of which is when Finster refers to the first generation of space children and the attitude they hold toward Earth. They are happy to be in space, where they feel safe. They feel particularly bad and a bit frightened for those who live on Earth with constant violence and war. It's a step back from the illusion that familiarity creates safety – because indeed we are all intimately familiar with the violence and war that is insistently bombarding us, and certainly have reached a point where we cannot conceivably see a way out of it. We've grown comfortable with war's presence. But this life in space, as created in the mind of Finster, holds the expectation that we ought and need not act in that way; it declares that acceptance of this way of life is a tremendously sorrowful state to any fully reasoning mind. In this way, this small part of his *Vision* acts as a reference point through which we can view our own world and realize its misgivings as unacceptable.

We can further draw value from *Vision's* everpresent need to ration the limited resources. As they've only taken enough food for a trip of 200 years, so each generation must keep in mind the needs of the upcoming generations and alter their own use for the benefit of the generations to come. In reality here on this Earth, as the world seems to be approaching infinite capitalism, we have urges to consume more and more, never thinking nor caring too considerably that anything will ever run out. It seems that Finster is making a comment on this situation, has taken the Earth in his hand and is saying: "Okay, we've got this place here called Earth; it's got only so many resources, and so many people. How do we go about extending our lives as long as we possibly can? Well, we ration our resources, and we don't war with each other."

The very last lines of Howard's *Vision* is meaningful in a very simplistic sense: "Then we live." This line, however, follows a much more extensive painting of heaven as a place of rest, of angels (not female or male), not of any Earthly things, as they will have passed away. The important message is that we need to let go of the things that trouble us before entering into heaven — we must leave them behind in order to have real heaven, and in this real heaven we will forget that the wartorn Earth ever existed in the first place. The line, "Then we live," answers the question "After enlightenment, then what? After heaven, then what?"

But what is it that we all really have to learn? I often think of the Hindu tradition of taking off from this world's responsibilities and going into the forest or other secluded part of the world to find higher meaning and value. Then I think of the structure of our US society: from five years old up into the last years of our teens we spend our lives in necessary institutions who test us to see how much of the standard information we've absorbed in those thirteen years of education. Then we are herded into institutions of even higher education (a select group of us), and there we experience continuous pressure to finish in four years straight. We are discouraged from taking time off to deeply evaluate our lives. However, we cannot silence our questioning spirit no matter how hard we attempt to ignore it.

In this period of our life journeys, we fill our plates up with text books and equations, tests, papers, theoretical discussions, achievements, and all of this is done in hopes of moving somewhere beyond our current plane of knowing and being. All of this we are doing under the instruction of professors. Professors have become messianic figures in the typical journey of the college-educated person, for they are the ones from whom we are learning in this stage of deep searching. As Howard has literally written between the lines of his *Vision of 1982*, our professors inadvertently put forth their life views between the lines of their academic lectures. It is this between-the-lines teaching that is most significant.

So what am I saying? Well, that this can be very dangerous. Why? Because a professor of calculus doesn't teach calculus because she wants to teach her students how to live in society or about finding meaning in life; yet that is what she is doing when students who are seeking answers to these questions sit in her classroom and attend

her lectures. We are under the impression that we can learn one thing in one classroom, and another thing in another classroom, and neither will influence the other. We obviously exist in a much more fluid manner than this, and although we may be focusing on learning one subject, our curiosity of many other things demands answers immediately and we simply begin taking in what is around us in regard to those questions. Often times these questions are so abstract and esoteric that we don't even realize we are asking them. We are seekers, on our own journeys in this world. What we seek seems to be operating on an agenda out of our conscious control, so that we find ourselves seeking some things but not other things, not at our own command but simply as we find ourselves.

Finding the answers to these questions is essential. In this way Finster's *Vision* is relevant to our lives as students, because his is a journey into a higher level of being and knowing, as is ours.

While I take note of many seemingly meaningless details in Finster's *Vision*, its essence remains as a universal reference point, with patterns identified by both Mircea Eliade, in *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, and by Carol Zaleski in *Otherworld Journeys*, as characteristic of shamanistic and mystical experiences.

Finster's first line of *Vision*, "I fall into a preview of my life to live over again into a different plan as a great vision," is reflective of his transformation at an elusive point in time. We are never told what this 'preview' is or why he 'fell' into it; but it certainly suggests a transformation from a life without awareness of a grand plan into one in which he is aware of an Ultimate Plan. Zaleski refers to the pattern of "visionary transformed" in which the visionary changes her life as a direct result of the *Vision* she experienced.

The role of visionary as messenger, which Zaleski points out as a consistent theme in those who have experienced otherworld journeys of some sort, is also particularly strong in Finster's *Vision*. He makes reference to this numerous times, and it is perhaps most succinctly put into words by this sentence: "I am sent to this planet to stand for truth." It is clear that he feels he is a messenger in a very general sense, but also in specific reference to his *Vision of 1982*: "And this is the *Vision* of Howard Finster and without a *Vision* the people will perish to saith the Bible (Finster 1982:81)."

Zaleski also illuminates the consistent use of vehicles as forms of spiritual transportation, as in the use of Elijah's chariot, Alexander's griffon, Muhammad's heavenly steed, as well as other carpets, ladders, and doves. Finster's vehicle to the Heaven of Heavens is his spaceship, which is a modern-day adaptation of this paradigm.

Finster creates two scenes in which dismemberment occurs. The first: "Farson and Longfellow just finally turned back to dust as the Bible reaches and the former things passed away and that no flesh and blood would enter the Kingdom of God so their bodies were changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye as they take on a whole new body and went away with Jesus (Finster 1982:70)."

And the second: "A leak came in their oxygen tank the shot up about 200 miles and their hands and feet begin to also disappear little by little 'til finally there were

only two skulls looking at one another. And then they put on a whole body. New like unto the body of Christ who was suddenly standing by them and Jesus said, 'Welcome they Good and faithful servants follow thou me(Finster1982:71-72).'"

In *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Mircea Eliade makes reference to the vital stage of dismemberment in shaman initiation procedures: their Earthly bodies must be taken apart and they must journey into the spirit world, and a new self must be constructed which can interact with both the spirit world and the material world. Farson and Longfellow experience a transformation very similar to this – and who are Farson and Longfellow but aspects of Finster's mind, aspects of his self, and in a larger picture then of each of ourselves?

As human beings we project our own thoughts onto our environment – the physical things, esoteric ideas, animals and people around us invoke emotions of all kinds within us. In writing or reading stories, we are exploring the "landscapes of our brains" as Dubuffer says. The line between the universe somewhere out there, and the truths lying within, is not only blurred but one in the same. Finster's *Vision of 1982* then becomes a journey into the innerspace of ourselves.

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## Pop Nihilism

FERNANDO MALDONADO

Popular culture in today's society is an interesting thing: both self-depreciating and self-congratulatory, it envelops the strongest beliefs that all of society contribute to it, creating a huge melting pot of ideas. Popular culture speaks to us through the medium of mass media: through movies, books, television, and music. When people think of what exactly is pop culture, they think of happy-go-lucky ideas and fashion trends (MTV, *True Life: Pop Culture*), but rarely does anyone think about nihilism when looking into pop culture.

In the minds of society, nihilism is the anti-thesis of pop culture. It is a dark entity in which lies chaos, destruction, and above all nothingness. It questions all the ideas about life and what it means, about whether things are worth what we hold them to be. Nihilism destroys popular culture's ideas that everything is good and that we have purpose.

Little does popular culture realize that nihilism is an integral part of itself. Within the most popular television shows, movies, and books, the ideas of nihilism are deeply rooted, and American society revels in these ideas.

Nietzsche, the creator of nihilism, never intended his ideas to be represented as we use them. Nihilism, to Nietzsche, was a means to an end, a tool with which humans could use to *transcend* the normal morality obligations we have and appreciate life in a new and different way than we ever could without nihilism.

Nihilism, as Nietzsche meant it to exist, was a break from all things that were human. Best known for his utterance that "God is dead", Nietzsche didn't mean that God was actually dead. He used the statement to divorce himself from life as he knew it. Walraff, in a book on understanding Nietzsche's writings, states the break (nihilism) from all things as:

...human ideas seem to him to have come to nothing: He wishes to reject morality and surrender reason and humanity. He views truth as a universal lie; previous philosophy as an established deception; Christianity as the triumph of the misfits and the failures, the weak and impotent; there is nothing holy or valid that he does not condemn. (441)

Nietzsche, in rejecting all the ideas and in his condemnation of them, releases himself from them. He need not be bothered by the moral obligations thrust upon him by society but is free to explore all the possibilities. The idea of this divorce is perhaps best brought down for the masses in *Fight Club*: "It is only when you lose everything do you truly have the freedom to do anything." This freedom, stated by Tyler Durden in the film, is the heart of nihilism.

Once a nihilistic philosophy of life is achieved, Nietzsche's philosophy develops: this is the *transcendence*. Nietzsche illustrates the point of transcendence perfectly in the preface to *Human, All Too Human*. In the preface Nietzsche describes a man who is going through nihilism, until one day he wakes up and says, "Where have I been?" (4) The man, now past nihilism, sees beauty in things, justice, higher purposes in the world around him where before there were none. He has *transcended* the bounds and become something better, more pure, than he was before.

But, unfortunately, not all nihilism ends in transcendence. The nihilism that finally does break away, finds an appreciation for life, and a higher purpose is what Nietzsche referred to as strong nihilism. The opposite, weak nihilism, Nietzsche called passive nihilism. These people do not have the strength to break free from the ideas that nothing has a meaning, and just further dig themselves into despair. Hibbs describes this fight against nihilism as "the heroic confrontation of nihilism" (18). Hibbs then goes on to show how passive nihilism fails (more eloquently than I could): "...but its long-term result is likely to be the trivialization of all aspiration, the inability to distinguish between the high and lower. Instead of providing a way to overcome nihilism, Nietzsche's remedy seems to immerse us more fully in it" (18). In this paragraph Hibbs is referring to nihilism being the problem and solution to transferring. He also is talking about having *the will* to overcome nihilism; another belief of Nietzsche's in that creative will is the means to overcome the despair. Hibbs shows that not everyone's will is strong enough to be released from the nothingness of nihilism.

Why exactly is nihilism so prevalent in our society and our popular culture, if it is the anti-thesis of what people believe in? Our society, a democratic society, is the breeding ground for nihilism, so Nietzsche says. He writes that democratic morality is the "code of the slave" (Hibbs, 12). The people in a democracy fall back on their morals and religions because their government is "free" but based on utility; we sell out services, our time, in order to survive in such a society. Democratic society states that all people are equal, that there are no differences, no one is special. This idea is stagnant, for the worth of a person is based on what they can do, not what they are; there is no room for personal growth in a democratic society because personal growth is worthless to society as a whole. When someone "goes to find him/herself," people generally make fun of them. There is no need to find out who a person is in our society, you are your job and home and how much money you make. You are what you are useful as. That is why creative will in our society, the will to remove oneself from nihilism, fails, because creativity is not a useful tool. There are thousands of

starving artists, writers, directors, and aspiring actor/actresses. Look at how few actually are able to contribute to society. Creativity is a burden to us.

As purveyors of passive nihilism we as a society can only show how inept and destructive nihilism can be. The examples of strong nihilism are so few and far between that we have forgotten how "good" can come of it. Weak, passive nihilism is laced within our society. I have seen a trend of passive nihilism and divided it into two categories: circular nihilism and destructive nihilism.

Circular nihilism is a form of nihilism where ideas and beliefs are thrown away over and over, leading a person back to the same belief of nothing at every chance they have. The idea of progress is present to the people involved in it; they do not see how they continually are being lead back to the beginning and not the end of nihilism and the birth of transcendence.

Perhaps the earliest form of circular nihilism in our century is Ernest Hemingway's novel, *The Sun Also Rises*. Set in the time between World War I and World War II, the children born, raised, and growing up in the time are labeled "The Lost Generation." They have no place in society; they hated the first World War and do not wish to be involved in the tensions that lead to the second World War, so they escape from society.

The novel centers itself around the two characters of Jake and Brett. Both characters are nihilism to the core; they believe in nothing. They do not have any attachment to their homelands or to the one in which they live in at any given time. They drink without abandon, and many times it is absinthe, known for bringing deep depression, which just reinforces their nihilistic ideas.

Brett and Jake love each other but hate saying it, for in their minds nothing could ever come of their love. Jake was injured in World War I, causing impotence. Many times he rages about his condition in the novel but never outright states exactly what it is. Because of his condition, both he and Brett believe their love for each other is worthless. They cannot make love and therefore can never love. In the beginning of the novel Brett comes to Jake's apartment, admits her love for him, but is ashamed of it. She shrugs it off, saying she is marrying Mike, a wealthy man from England, and therefore her emotional attachment to Jake doesn't mean anything. Jake, in a very nihilistic conversation, agrees, and says it doesn't matter anyway, that nothing matters anymore.

The novel then progresses with Jake and Brett in various situations: traveling Europe, fishing, going to the bullfights, and talking to many different types of people. In the end they think nothing of their experiences and conversations, to them it is all worthless.

Many times throughout the novel Jake and Brett kiss and try to show their emotional sides towards each other, but it never works out, for one of them always says something nihilistic and that just reminds them of how worthless life is. One instance is when Jake is talking about his injury, remarking that it is supposed to be funny, and then says in the next breath, "No one knows anything."

The end of the book is almost exactly like the beginning. Brett and Jake are again alone with each other and admit their love. The words Brett says are almost verbatim from their original conversation about love.

Brett: Oh Jake, we could have such a good damned time together.

Jake: Yes. Isn't it pretty to think so?

The nihilism in the book is circular because it leads the characters right back to where they started. Still there is no love in their lives, nothing truly worth living for, and they are resigned to it. They still, after all their experiences within the novel, never strive to break free of their nihilistic chains.

One of the more recent versions of circular nihilism is present in the movie *Trainspotting*. The entire film is a social commentary, degrading our society and the beliefs of that society while at the same time trying to become one with society. The film opens up with Renton, the main character of the narrative, discussing society around them. His speech in the opening is what is most remembered, for it bookends the film.

Choose life. Choose a job. Choose a career. Choose a family...

But why would I want to do a thing like that? I chose not to choose life: I chose something else. And the reasons? There are no reasons. Who need reasons when you've got heroin? People think it's all about misery and desperation and death and all that shite, which is not to be ignored, but what they forget is the pleasure of it. Otherwise we wouldn't do it. After all, we're not fucking stupid. At least, we're not that fucking stupid.

When you're on junk you have only one worry: scoring. When you're off it you are suddenly obliged to worry about all sorts of other shite. ... You have to worry about bills, about food, about some football team that never fucking wins, about human relationships and all the things that really don't matter when you've got a sincere and truthful junk habit.

This speech is where Renton begins to make fun of society as he knows it. He sees his friends and family, the people around him, as choosing all these things, which mean absolutely nothing to him. Those things are worthless. The words condemn capitalistic consumerism and democracy's ability to make the choices of what you want for your life. It appears that Renton, in showing that he is not of a democratic mind and sees the "bad" things democracy has spawned around him, has the ability to get away from nihilism. But instead he embraces nihilism. Notice he says, "There are no reasons" when he chooses not to choose life. He has something better than life: heroin.

In the second half of Renton's speech, his discussion of heroin, he again refuses everything in his society. On heroin there is nothing to worry about, for all there is in life is the next hit. His ideas on heroin are very synonymous with nihilism. In nihil-

ism nothing matters, for there are no reasons. There is a pleasure in nihilism like there is in heroin; you are free from all the constraints moral society places on its citizens.

As the narrative progresses, Renron shows the viewer, through his experiences, how bad society is, and how good his life is without rules and worries. Once the film comes to a close, Renron, after betraying his friends in a drug deal, now wants to choose life, but he doesn't sound sincere. His reiteration of his opening speech, but with him trying to "become like you" is mocking. He hates it even though he wants it.

The circular aspect of the nihilism is within the narrative of the film. Renron is on heroin, he tries to quit, succeeds for a time, but hates the life he is leading. He believes it is even more worthless being in society than his original speech. Then Renron once again goes back on heroin, and falls in love with that lifestyle again, only to leave it at the film's end. Heroin and nihilism are the same thing within the confines of the film, and they represent pop culture's disdain. They are both seductive and dark, and no matter how hard you try to get away from it, you slip back to its dark embrace.

The last incident of circular nihilism is the most famous: the entire series of *Seinfeld*. People all over America love this show, which is the pinnacle of nihilism. Time and time again the characters within the show state the show is about nothing. The entire premise of the show is Jerry, George, Elaine, and Kramer all talking about asinine things that mean nothing in today's world. They want to know why things work like sexuality, but even after they discuss it, and sometimes even figure it out, they never use it again in the later episodes. The characters are unchanging and childish in the way an infant is childish; once something is out of sight it is as if it never happened to them.

The series begins and ends like my last two examples of circular nihilism; almost exactly the same. In the first episode of the show Jerry argues with George about how stupid the buttons on his shirt look, and the last episode ends with the same argument. Nothing is accomplished or learned from the totality of experience the characters had, and that is perhaps the most depressing thought of circular nihilism.

Destructive nihilism is where nihilistic ideas cause, or lead to, the destruction of society or the destruction of the person who enacts it in some form. Destructive nihilism also has a predilection to dealing with evil. Either the characters are somehow evil, or the societies the characters are trying to destroy are evil.

The first example of destructive nihilism is *American Psycho*, both the novel and the film. Both are set in 1980's society, a time where conservatism was on the rise, and class differences were very important. The main character of the film is Patrick Bateman, a yuppie of the times. The film opens up with Bateman describing himself and what he is. Bateman says many things in a nihilistic light, that inside does not matter and that there are no more barriers to cross. He also says in the opening of the film that there is no deeper knowledge to him as a person than what you see. He is

composed of nothing but greed and disgust, as he states in later narration. Bateman's philosophy goes very deep into Nietzsche's ideas about nihilism and representations. He even states that there is an "idea of a Patrick Bateman." Everything Bateman says about himself and his life is directly derived from nihilism.

But unlike circular nihilism, where nothing is actually accomplished, *American Psycho's* nihilism turns towards the destructive, chaotic element. Patrick Bateman goes on a killing spree, and though not explained why in the film, the book states that murder is the only way Bateman can feel anything at all. He kills in an almost nihilistic manner; in a society where class is everything, to Bateman everyone is a victim. He kills his co-workers, prostitutes, and beggars without compunction or any second thought. This is why Bateman's nihilism is destructive; he feels nothing and is nothing in his own mind, and therefore he tries to fill it up with something, some sort of feeling. He is not strong enough; he does not possess the creative will to leave nihilism behind and go into the process of transcendence.

The other example of destructive nihilism is also a book/movie combo. *Fight Club* is another film that nihilism is a part of at its core. We are introduced in the beginning of the film to the narrator, who we call Jack. He has no true name or identity and is faceless in the world. He creates identities for himself when he goes to support groups, his only bastion of hope in an otherwise dead world.

Jack sees his world as dead because of his insomnia. He hasn't slept in over six months, and says he is lost because of it. "I was lost in oblivion- dark and silent and complete" are Jack's words in a voice over about his life. This is just the first nihilistic statement of many. Several scenes later Jack speaks more about what exactly insomnia does to you, how the nights and days begin to blend over time, how time is in a sense lost and meaningless in his world of insomnia. Jack has given up all hope and is leading a nihilistic life. His nihilism runs so deep that even the passage of day into night into day again holds no meaning for him anymore.

Jack, after visiting a doctor about his insomnia, is told to go to a support group and see what real pain is. While Jack is there he is told by Bob, "a real moosie" that it is ok to cry. Crying is the only release for Jack, and after he cries he states, "This was freedom. Losing all hope was freedom." The acceptance of death is the last true feeling in Jack's life, and at the support groups he is around other people who accept death as their only option, and are resigned to their fate. He even says, "Every evening I died and every evening I was born. Resurrected." Because Jack finally accepts death with them and is able to cry, he can leave the oblivion of sleeplessness.

The nihilism of *Fight Club* goes further than any other film has, it even speaks of a death of God, but in the form of being abandoned by fathers. In a scene entitled "Tyler's Kiss," Tyler confronts Jack while making soap. Tyler kisses Jack's hand and then pours lye onto it, telling Jack to stay with the pain when he begins to meditate. The speech Tyler gives in the book follows as such:

This is the greatest moment of your life and you are off somewhere, missing it. Your father was your model for God, and if your father bailed out on you, what does

that tell you about God? You have to consider the possibility that God doesn't like you. In all probability He hates you. His hate is better than his indifference. We are God's middle children, with no special place in history and no special attention. Unless we get God's attention, we have no hope of damnation or redemption. The lower you fall, the higher you fly. The farther you run, the more God wants you back. Someday you will die. And until you know that, you are useless to me.

This is a much more in depth explanation to Tyler and Jack's "death of God." Like Nietzsche they reject God. But instead of truly believing God is dead, they believe they are abandoned because their models for God left them. The film states the same thing, that "His hate is better than His indifference." The next line in the movie is a simplification of Nietzschean ideals: "It's only when you truly lose everything that you are free to do anything." This is the essence of nihilism. Nietzsche defined nihilism as "...the moral state in which the highest values devalue themselves, human aspiration shrinks, and the great questions and elevating quests of previous ages no longer have any resonance in the human soul (Hibbs 6)." The two, while not entirely synonymous, are incredibly similar in essence.

The movie is destructive nihilism. The goal of Tyler Durden and Project Mayhem is to destroy society as we know it and go back to a simpler age. Tyler points this idea out in his final scene with Jack before he vanishes. He describes a dream where people are planting crops in the streets of Manhattan and animals walk among humans.

Though the movie is very much about destructive nihilism, it tries harder to begin transcendence than any other nihilistic film before it. Tyler and Jack both, in their nihilistic ideas of the world, see it as evil. It is a thing that must be done with, started anew before we can be free of it. Their attempt at transcendence, in reaching the higher ground of a simpler, nobler kind of life, is never seen in either the movie or the book and only hinted at in Tyler's dreams. Therefore we are only left with the destructive, nihilistic aspect of the story.

The only example of strong, creative nihilism I have ever seen is from the film *American Beauty*. This film is one that begins with nihilism and ends with transcendence, as Nietzsche intended his philosophy to work towards. It begins with Lester Burnham, a middle aged man living in a "normal" suburban community, with the white picket fence, two cars, and a beautiful house. This is the epitome of the American Dream. He has everything popular culture wants for itself. And he hates it. The scene in the beginning of the film, where Lester has a voice over and introduces himself, is actually entitled "Dead Already." Lester views himself as dead; his life has no meaning. The highpoint of Lester's day is masturbating in the shower. "It's all downhill from here" as he says.

Lester knows his life is meaningless. In a voice over, while driving to work, he states something is missing in his life, something very important, and he has no idea what it is. He feels sedated. This sedation is the shrinking aspiration of nihilism; Lester doesn't even try and search for this missing entity that was once a part of him, he resigns himself to the fact that it is gone. He is a big gigantic loser as his family

thinks he is. His daughter hates him and his wife controls every aspect of his life. He is nothing.

Lester then goes to his daughter, Jane's half time show at her high school basketball game. This is the moment of awakening, the first glimpse of Nietzschean transcendence. Lester, in a voice over as he is dreaming, describes the feeling as "the weirdest thing. It feels like I have been in a coma for years, and I'm just now waking up. It's... Spec-tac-ular." In Lester's awakening he glimpses what he has been missing in the nihilistic life he is leading, and he wants it, embodied in the form of this beautiful girl.

From that moment on Lester begins to change, to become a nobler man. He stands up to his wife and his boss and enjoys a freedom nearly no one has in our society, the freedom to choose his life and truly be happy. Within the narrative of the film we watch as Lester grows from a nihilistic man to an appreciator of aesthetic beauty. He seems to do things now because he enjoys them, not because society tells him they are enjoyable. He buys a Firebird because he always wanted one, and he tries to seduce his wife because he still loves her. Some critics say that all Lester went through was a mid-life crisis, something almost every man on earth goes through at one point or another; a realization that you have not accomplished the goals you had when you set down on your path of life, and an attempt to change your life to meet those goals once more. But Lester is not going through a mid-life crisis. He truly is becoming beyond good and evil, hitting the higher moral state that Nietzsche tells us about. Many people over the age of 50 dislike the film, for they say that Lester was nothing but a pedophile; he lusts after Angela. But Lester is not a pedophile because he never goes through with the act. He was enamored of Angela from afar and would have never touched her had she not approached him with the story of her and Jane having a fight because she thought Lester was sexy. Once Lester realizes that this girl is not the sexy woman he dreamed her to be, naughty and seductive, but an innocent like his daughter, he just marvels about his life and how beautiful it all is. When asked about his life by Angela, Lester is surprised that he is great, his life is happy.

In the final scene before Lester's death, he flashes back to his life and notices the little things he hadn't thought about in years. His final speech is so moving I cannot help but feel exactly how he feels in his moment of understanding his transcendence.

I guess I could be pretty pissed off about what happened to me... but it's hard to stay mad, when there is so much beauty in the world. Sometimes I feel like I'm seeing it all at once, and it's too much... my heart fills up like a balloon that's about to burst... And then I remember to relax, to stop trying to hold onto it. And then it flows through me like rain, and I can't help but feel gratitude... for every single moment of my stupid little life.

Kevin Spacey does an amazing job as Lester. In this last speech you can almost feel the genuine amazement that Lester has at the magnitude of beauty within the world around him. He sees beauty and goodness in everything now, and it is the greatest part of his "stupid little life."



But Lester isn't the only character in the film to achieve transcendence. Ricky, Jane's boyfriend, also has reached the point where what the world believes as being "bad" or "wrong" or "evil" or "sick" is to him beautiful. He sees beauty in a dead bird and a plastic bag flying on the wind of a cold fall day. He sees beauty and God in the eyes of a dying homeless woman. He doesn't see anything beautiful about Angela, who to him is the opposite of beautiful because she is not honest about herself. Ricky even tells Jane the same idea that Lester closes the movie with: how there is so much beauty in the world and how sometimes it hurts so much to take all that beauty inside. He doesn't hate his father for beating him or sending him to military school, he actually understands that it was done out of love.

Ricky is so firm and untouchable in his appreciation of beauty that he cannot be anything but on the higher state of spiritual ground that is transcendence. Nothing fazes him, and everything in the world is interesting, unique, and in some way beautiful.

Popular culture views nihilism as bad because so many of our examples of nihilism in our society are bad. Through the forces of circular and destructive nihilism we see despair and chaos, and, with only one true example of what strong nihilism is, there is very little to base why nihilism is a good thing in the unwashed masses. Nihilism in popular culture is a distant and sometimes evil thing, but in reality it is truly horrific due to recent events with the Columbine shootings. The two boys who did the shooting say they were influenced by Nietzsche's writings on nihilism. But it was not Nietzsche's writings they were influenced by, but the ideas that popular culture has extrapolated from nihilism. To society nihilism is a dark and destructive force, something to be scared of. To people who read all of Nietzsche's writings and truly understand that nihilism is but a tool to become a better person, nihilism is a savior.

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# Platonic Realism Reconstructed

JEFFREY SYRACUSE

Maddy's *Realism in Mathematics* is a noble endeavor to solve some of the ancient dilemmas encountered in the philosophy of mathematics. Although the work has since been abandoned by Maddy himself, I will endeavor to show that it is a worthy attempt to solve the problems of mathematical metaphysics and epistemology despite some fundamental flaws both in its intention and execution. The work is worthy because its attempted solution to these problems seeks to do justice to the manner in which mathematicians themselves perceive their art. Maddy's realism may possess many philosophical problems in and of itself, but I believe its most damning aspect lies in its compromising attitude towards the very Platonism to which it is trying to pay homage. Indeed, some of the philosophical failings of *Realism in Mathematics* to which Maddy herself is blind (e.g., combining empiricism and realism) are addressed in the writings of Plato himself. Maddy's project should not have been abandoned for Naturalism, but rather for a stronger Platonistic realism.

Maddy explains from the very outset of her project that her motivation for choosing a realist metaphysics is that most mathematicians are platonistic realists. They believe that they are discovering new properties in independently existent "real" entities. Some of the greatest mathematicians in recent times were realists, such as Frege and Gödel, and as the bearers of the greatest mathematical knowledge, we should very likely trust their intuitions. I will return to the Platonism of mathematicians later in the paper, but first I wish to explore Maddy's compromise of Platonism in parallel with the ideas put forth by Plato himself in his dialogue *Theaetetus*. I will conclude with some of the failings Maddy's Platonism incurred, I believe, by the compromise.

## 1 - Plato

Ostensibly, the Platonic dialogue *Theaetetus* concerns the nature of knowledge. However, one should be open to interpretations of the dialogue which concern mathematical knowledge in particular. The two principle characters, Theodorus and Theaetetus, are both mathematicians, and their dialogue is introduced as being read

to Euclid. There will probably be at least a few instances in which I am perhaps attributing too much to the *Theaetetus*, but I believe a strength of the Platonic format is that it is loose enough to inspire new philosophical contemplation in its readers.

The dialogue begins with the assertion that knowledge is perception, and this is later amended to truly perceiving, for mistakes in perception or in memory cannot be admitted as knowledge. This is directly analogous to the Benacerrafian difficulty which prompted both Maddy's work and so much else in the philosophy of mathematics. That is, if we admit primarily empirical sources for our knowledge, then how are we to countenance mathematical objects? As abstract, acausal entities, we cannot have the kind of sensual interaction necessary to gain justified, true beliefs about them.

Plato's finesse to this kind of objection is to advocate a kind of rationalism. (I am aware of the anachronism here, but again, it is my interpretation of the dialogue.)

You are thinking of being and not being, likeness and unlikeness, sameness and difference...and other numbers which are applied to objects of sense; and you mean to ask, through what bodily organ the soul perceives odd and even numbers and other arithmetical conceptions...my only notion is, that these, unlike objects of sense, have no separate organ, but that the mind, by a power of her own, contemplates the universals in all things. (Plato, p.18)

This seems to be a much weaker rationalism than the remembrance argument posed in the *Meno*. Certain kinds of knowledge, such as the knowledge of universals or mathematics, seems to be a result of the ruminations of our own minds. They are intrinsic aspects of our cognitive processes. This assertion appears to skirt possible objections from Quinean arguments against aprioricity. While such objections may have their place, it is my belief that they are taken too strongly. Within both the philosophy of language and the philosophy of mathematics, there is ample reason to believe that we have, built into the very operations of our mind, the ability to create languages, mathematical assertions and universalize particulars. This would suggest that, at least as far as human knowledge is capable of delving, mathematical abstracts are intuitively accessible.

Doubts about the Quinean anti-aprioricity arguments are something I would like my reader to keep in mind, but I do not want to stray too far from the topic. My previous assertions should probably be qualified here, for Plato's locusts take a distinctly empirical position towards the end of the dialogue. Socrates asks Theaetetus to imagine the mind as an empty aviary, and the various forms of knowledge are birds which must be possessed and caught in order to be utilized. The empty aviary at birth is the empiricist's blank slate in the mind of a child.

Plato develops another empirical notion in his description of knowledge, that of fundamental elements. Plato compares these fundamental elements to the letters in a

syllable, many of which make up a word. Analogously, a complex concept is made up of many smaller concepts, and these of fundamental elements. These elements must be perceived and cannot be known, as he states:

the elements or letters are only objects of perception, and cannot be defined or known; but the syllables or combinations of them are known and expressed, and are apprehended by true opinion. (opposing knowledge - rational explanation of all the parts) (Plato, p.26)

Why then, it may rightly be wondered, do I maintain that a rational element is being implied in this very obvious empiricism? *Theaetetus* is one of Plato's dialogues that does not arrive at a firm solution. It ends by dismissing the empirical notions of knowledge because they do not allow for a conceivable method of relating generalities to particulars. That is, to have knowledge of a particular thing is to have both a true opinion of it and to apprehend those characteristics which distinguish it from all other things. However, as Socrates states,

We are supposed to acquire a right opinion of the differences which distinguish one thing from another when we have already a right opinion of them, and so we go round and round...for to add those things which we already have, in order that we may learn what we already think, is like a soul utterly benighted. (Plato, 30)

Thus, the requirements are circular, to obtain knowledge of a thing is to be able to distinguish it by its differences, but to distinguish it by its differences is to have knowledge of a thing.

It is my belief that the failing here is supposed to make us recollect some of Plato's other writings and through a combination of ideas arrive at a solution. As previously stated, Plato's *Meno* advocates a kind of rationalism by asserting that all knowledge is remembered from a previous existence. If we weaken that conception of knowledge and combine it with the now foundering empiricism of the *Theaetetus*, we have a conception of knowledge in which most things are learned but certain abstract universals must be intrinsic to our mind, lest a vicious circle develop.

Thus, the application to mathematics now becomes more clear. Mathematics, as a study of abstract entities, is similar to Plato's conception of universals as forms. In order for philosophical or mathematical pursuits to have any kind of merit, there must be a way for the human mind to apprehend those concepts. We are quite able both to recognize instances of universals and understand mathematical applications. Recall also that the slave in Plato's *Meno* was said to "remember" the mathematical theory which Socrates is reaching from the depths of his mind/soul. The soul, as the measure of man, must be able of its own accord to obtain knowledge of abstractions such as universals or mathematical knowledge. To modernize this exercise, Maddy's

empiricism should have us perceive sets because it is essential to the very workings of our mind that we do so, not because they exist in their instantiations, and a flaw of her argument is that she affirms the opposite. (Although, it could be regarded as implicit in her neuro-physiological ruminations, except that she is such a confirmed empiricist.)

## 2 - Maddy

My reformulation of Maddy can now be more explicitly expressed. Maddy believed that realism was justified from indispensability arguments concerning the necessity of mathematics to science. It seems to me that realism should be affirmed from the same sorts of considerations that prompts most mathematicians to believe that their field concerns independent, real objects. It is perfectly acceptable to use naturalistic justifications for our ability to perceive sets. Gödel himself appears to have believed this, but science indispensability concerns should not rule out the possibility of mathematical realism.

A brief elaboration of certain key elements in Maddy's philosophy will clarify the argument. Maddy developed a two-tiered epistemology for mathematical objects in her book, *Realism in Mathematics*. The first tier of her epistemology presents a possible method by which we might perceive mathematical objects. Maddy posits that when we are presented with physical objects, our mind develops certain faculties by which groupings of physical objects, or sets in an impure sense, might be recognized.

The cognitive theories she develops to support this claim are taken from the neurophysiologist Hebb. Briefly, Maddy and Hebb believe that when the senses are presented with various physical objects, the neurons of the mind develop into cell-assemblies which become stimulated whenever the senses are again stimulated by that object. This theory allows Maddy to satisfy the Benacerrafian difficulties of sufficient causal interaction between subject and object to allow knowledge. If we have knowledge of any physical object, then we have knowledge of sets. However, Maddy takes her epistemology to be purely empirical, so there are generally philosophical problems that arise when a realist metaphysics and an empiricist epistemology are combined.

Levine's essay, *Conjoining Mathematical Empiricism with Mathematical Realism: Maddy's Account of Set Perception Revisited*, fleshes out some of these difficulties. Essentially, Levine states that Maddy's empiricism is too stringent, and does not allow for set perception in instances in which mathematical empiricists would like to say that such perception has occurred. For example, a Gettier case is posited in which a subject perceives a set of three chairs before him, and there are actually three chairs before him, but the objects of his perception is an image of three chairs that are behind him. In the Maddian system we are not obtaining knowledge of the set of three chairs, but rather of three chair percepts, and this only if a rather loose interpretation of the Maddian system is employed. This results, through an application of Kitcher's definition of *a priori*, in empirical *a priori* knowledge, a blatant contradiction in terms.

By adding a rationalist element into Maddy's theory, I believe that this problem can be overcome and the first tier salvaged. This also brings her realism more in accord with the original ruminations of Plato as I mentioned earlier and brings her philosophy a bit more in line with some of Gödel's thinking. That is, the developing human mind will, barring mishap, always develop certain concepts concerning groupings of objects. These truths, then, are in a sense built into the very functioning of our cognitive faculties. This would imply a degree of rationalism that Maddy does not seem to want to admit, although as previously stated it is implicit in her writings on the subject. Consider,

Do I test to see whether or not the two sets of fingers on my right and left hands can be combined to form a larger set of fingers? No, once I am able to understand the questions the answer is obvious...In childhood, such manipulations ...helped engender my ability to see sets in the first place...but once I have this ability, my conviction...doesn't depend on my testing a variety of the sets I now see. (Maddy, 67-68)

Thus, the formation of set concepts would arise no matter what our sensory history, and they qualify as *a priori* knowledge by Kitcher's definition. By accepting that the fundamental concept is indeed an *a priori* truth about us, we introduce enough rationalism to maintain an intelligible account of set perception.

### 3 - Gödel

We do not, I believe, wish to make this rationalism too strong, lest we put too great a distance between our perceptual faculties and the mathematical objects whose reality we desire to maintain. Mathematical objects must be sensually apprehensible. However, the fact that these truths appear to be built into the workings of our minds helps to give credence to Gödel's beliefs about mathematical intuition. That is, it is almost as if the mind contains a sixth sense which allows us to perceive mathematical objects. The reason for his firm dedication to the reality of mathematical objects lays in his earlier works in mathematics. Gödel's proof of undecidability in formally structured mathematics led him to believe that the only true measure of mathematical knowledge must come from perceptions, albeit at times unclear, of independent mathematical entities. As Wang writes,

In fact, his (Gödel's) experience was very gratifying when he was able to introduce the constructible sets by combining the highly nonconstructive (and indeterminate for our knowledge) concept of arbitrary ordinals with the avowedly anti-objectivistic ramified hierarchy. G himself is much aware of the flexibility of the use of his sincerely believed...objectivism (Wang, 204) [See also Appendix A]

Gödel also points to the fundamental rules of logic as apparent only to the power of intuition. [See Appendix B for Wang's elaboration of this]

Despite the merits of these arguments, I realize that they do not stringently prove the existence of mathematical objects, especially since I advocated a form of rationalism that implies the apriority of certain fundamental mathematical and logical truths. How are we to be sure that the Gödelian intuitionism and Platonic rationalism that I have introduced do not merely point to a fact about our cognitive processes alone and not to an ability of those processes to characterize and explore existent mathematical objects?

#### 4 - Indispensability

One of Maddy's chief reasons for abandoning realism was a concern over indispensability's (the second tier of her epistemology) ability to justify mathematical objects as actually existent. In her work, *Realism in Mathematics*, Maddy supported the claim that the mathematical objects that we perceive are real through Quinean indispensability arguments. That is, she claimed that a realistic, objective, ontology was indispensable to our best understanding of science and mathematics. However, in her more recent work, *Naturalism in Mathematics*, she repudiates this line of thought,

among the various justifications proposed for  $\Omega^{\#}$  and the rest, the most compelling seem to rest on maximizing principles of a sort quite unlike anything that turns up in the practice of natural science...the scientist posits only those entities without which she cannot account for our observations, while the set theorist posits as many entities as she can, short of inconsistency (Maddy, 131)

Maddy now dismisses indispensability's capability to justify a realist ontology. Such a claim seems to be absurd in two respects. First and foremost, it blatantly contradicts the manner in which mathematics is conducted and viewed by its practitioners. Secondly, the "irreconcilable" discrepancy between scientific and mathematic indispensability does not seem to me to exist, at least in the condemning manner in which Maddy views it.

My first objection is a common theme in this paper, and I have already discussed it at length. Mathematics without a realist ontology loses the objective claim so important to the pursuit. Furthermore, and Maddy herself seemed to have argued this point, a realist ontology is indispensable to the science of mathematics itself. Science can be "done" without math, but it is easier to complete *with* mathematics. Mathematics flows more freely, makes more sense in the minds of its practitioners, when it is *realistically* considered. That is, it is indispensable for the necessary intuitive conceptions for mathematics to be thoroughly explored that it be considered real. As Maddy states when describing the controversy over the axiom of choice,



From our set theoretic realist's perspective on mathematical evidence, Zermelo is recognizing both intrinsic supports - in terms of 'intuitive evidence' - and extrinsic supports - in terms of the role of the axiom in overall scientific theorizing. (Maddy, 118)

Gödel as well viewed the elusive nature of set theory as a testament to the independent, objective nature of mathematics. Just as certain complex environmental systems defy clear-cut mathematic systematization (e.g. weather patterns, certain chemical reactions, certain aspects of quantum physics), mathematics itself defies strict formalization. In its most essential form, mathematics attains the kind of complexity available only to objects beyond our control with their own independent reality.

The second objection to Maddy's criticism is that it is not sufficient grounds for dismissing a realist ontology. Though I am in favor of treating mathematics as a science and opening it to the same sorts of qualifications that sciences receive, I do not believe that it can be appreciated in exactly the same manner as a strictly physical science. Although mathematics seeks ontologically rich first principles, whereas science is conservative and careful in its explorations, the nature of mathematical objects can only become observable from a sufficiently rich ontology. Scientific theories which invalidate further study, i.e. over-incorporate until they become irrefutable and sterile, are vacuous. Similarly, mathematical theories which result in barren ontologies invalidate the ability for further mathematical questioning and study. This is merely a methodological concern and should not influence the metaphysical standing of mathematical objects. Furthermore, the overlap of science and mathematics in certain highly theoretical fields (e.g. string theory), proves to me that mathematical objects can be considered existent, and I see no principled basis why this existence should apply to some but not all of them.

## 5 - Conclusion

Mathematical entities are most efficient and intuitive when they are considered to be real. Historically speaking, such a claim requires tempering Maddy's empiricism with a bit of rationalism. This is not to abandon an empirical notion of mathematical knowledge, but merely to formulate a "compromise empiricism" that grants the mind the *a priori* ability to recognize sets. Set-hood in the abstract thus resides within the mind independent of particular experience, but particular experiences can aid in the development of a more robust understanding of set-hood. That is, a child will not develop the latent concepts unless sensual contact with some sets is established, and later in life visual aids may help to further understanding of more complex concepts. Quinean indispensability arguments also assist in the proof of mathematical reality, although their problematic consequences need not invalidate mathematical realism once the nature of mathematical objects is more properly understood. These concerns aside, however, it seems that simple reflection on mathematical practice and cognition is sufficient to entail realism. The mathematician is like one squinting

at an object in the distance, and who in time will see it more clearly, or misrepresent it, or see it differently than another. One may easily picture Gödel in this way while he was beginning to prove the consistency of the axiom of choice, when he wrote the words, "A (Every set is constructible) seems to be absolute in some sense, although it is not possible in the present state of affairs to give a precise meaning to this phrase." (Gödel, 26)

## Appendix A

Part of a letter by Gödel, reprinted in Wang's work, *Reflections on Gödel*, that illustrates the necessity of non-constructivist methods in proving the consistency of the continuum. It is relevant to our present discussion by the illustrated worth of intuitive necessity. Reproduced here due to spatial concerns within the body of the essay proper.

It must be understood *cum grano salis*. Of course, the formalistic point of view did not make *impossible* consistency proofs by means of transfinite models. It only made them much harder to discover, because they are somehow not congenial to this attitude of mind. However, as far as, in particular, the continuum hypothesis is concerned, there was a special obstacle which *really* made it *practically impossible* for constructivists to discover my consistency proof. It is the fact that the ramified hierarchy, which had been invented *expressly for constructivistic purposes*, has to be used in an *entirely nonconstructive way*. A similar remark applies to the concept of mathematical truth, where formalists considered formal demonstrability to be an *analysis* of the concept of mathematical truth and, therefore, were of course not in a position to *distinguish* the two. (Wang, 204-205)

## Appendix B

Lewis Carroll's "What the tortoise said to Achilles," reproduced by Wang to help illustrate the difference between intuition and proof.

- (A) Things that are equal to the same are equal to each other.
- (B) The Two sides of this triangle are things that are equal to the same
- (C) The two sides of this triangle are equal to each other.
- (D) If A and B are true, Z must be true.
- (E) If A and B and C are true, Z must be true.
- (F) If A and B and C and D are true, Z must be true.

And so on.

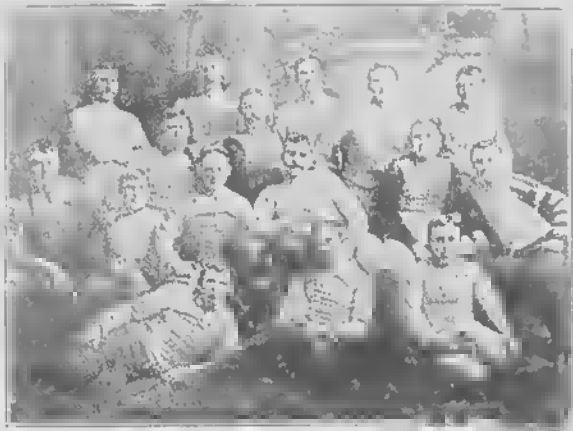
The Solution to this puzzle is the observation that we stop at (C), because our logical intuition tells us that (C) is true...which we do not prove but see to be true by intuition. (Wang, 204)

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LEHIGH GENTLEMEN



## *Fast Times at Ridgemont High:* A Vehicle for Feminist Discourse

ERICA BERG

One of the foremost topics of heated debate in feminist film theory and criticism is the question as to whether or not mainstream Hollywood films directed by women can possibly be vehicles for feminist discourse. For the purpose of this paper, I shall borrow Robin Wood's use of the term "mainstream" "to distinguish fictional feature films intended to reach general audiences from experimental or avant-garde work produced without expectation of widespread distribution and standing resolutely apart from anything that could be called 'entertainment'" (Wood 344). While several feminist film critics, subscribing to Laura Mulvey's psychoanalytic attacks against narrative cinema and visual pleasure, believe that there is no room within what they conceive to be the stifling confines of mainstream film to foster feminist discourse, others are more optimistic. Some maintain that disruptions in the narrative can occur to alter the ending of the film, making it less patriarchal than the norm, while still others believe a feminist discourse can at once conform to and deviate from the mainstream genre formula to yield a comprehensive feminist message. Critically examining Amy Heckerling's 1982 *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, a Hollywood film in which feminist discourse elbows its way through a quintessentially mainstream narrative structure without creating an impression of overall incoherence, it would be difficult not to accept the latter school of feminist thought concerning mainstream films directed by women.

Many feminist film critics believe that, because any feminist message voiced in mainstream film must conform to narrative conventions and genres developed by and for patriarchy, the feminist voice will inevitably be muffled. This muffling of feminist discourse in turn leaves the woman stranded in the role she has always occupied in mainstream cinema: the passive female object upon which the active straight male subject casts his neurotic gaze, denying that she lacks a penis and thus assuring himself that he indeed will not be castrated, deriving pleasure from this assurance. "In psychoanalytic terms, the female figure... connotes something that the look continually circles around but disavows: her lack of a penis, implying a threat of castration and hence unpleasure" (Mulvey 35). In this role of "bearer of the bleeding wound"

(Mulvey 29), the woman is given a handful of unappealing choices as to what type of masochistic object she will be, the primary two being fetish or masquerade. Working from this premise, it is not surprising that Mulvey proposes the destruction of the narrative and visual pleasure associated with mainstream film as the chief objective of women's cinema. Yet some feminist film critics disagree with Mulvey, propounding instead that there may be ample room for feminist discourse within the narrative confines of mainstream film.

In their critique of Dorothy Arzner's films, Claire Johnson and Pam Cook suggest that while a female director's intervention in patriarchal films could do little to change mainstream narrative conventions, she could create disturbances and imbalances, making the film's happy ending problematic or unsatisfying (Wood 343). Wood takes their suggestion a step further, declaring, "It remains unproven that the patriarchal language of mainstream narrative film cannot be transformed and redeemed, that a woman's discourse cannot speak through it" (Wood 344). Such films that succeed in asserting feminist discourse, Wood argues, "can really only be appreciated in relation to the generic expectations and formulae they at once part fulfill, part undermine" (Wood 345). One film that clearly does this is *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*.

While it adheres to the terms of the mainstream '80s high school genre (outlined below), *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* also digresses from them in two radical ways. First, the female as well as the male is allowed the position of the "hunter," while the male as well as the female is the "hunted," rather than the first role being occupied solely by the male and the second occupied strictly by the female, as these roles are in wholly patriarchal films. Secondly, the female is also allowed to be the "looker," while the male is permitted to be the "looked at," without favoring one sex's position over the other's, as the male's is favored over the female's in patriarchal mainstream films. "Where *Fast Times* succeeds, against all reasonable expectations, is in constructing a position for the female spectator that is neither masochistic nor merely compliant" (Wood 349). Furthermore, the film reinforces the female as spectator position by punishing the male in the instances that he treats the female as object by interrupting his fetishistic fantasies. Also, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* mocks the very psychoanalytic cause of female objectification and fetishization by visually hinting at castration. Moreover, the female relationship, which is usually portrayed as petty and divided in patriarchal mainstream films, is depicted as nurturing and unified in Heckerling's film. And, finally, the ending, which many feminist film theorists believe to be crucial in establishing a film's discourse as feminist or non-feminist, does not undermine the feminist discourse voiced throughout the rest of the film.

Wood delineates the mainstream '80s teen cycle as being a 5-pronged formula:

1. Sex. Even though school is the setting, the films at no point show the slightest interest in education (unless negatively, as a nuisance). ... The assumption is that teenagers could not possibly be interested in anything except sex. ...

2. *The Suppression of Parents.* Given that the teenagers of the films still live at home, the almost total absence of parents is rather remarkable. ...Parents are a mysteriously necessary evil, to be avoided whenever possible. ...Parents interfere actually or potentially with the pursuit of sex...[and] are, in fact reduced to the ignominious role of supplying occasional suspense (can the son/daughter get away in time for the next sexual encounter?)

3. *Multicharacter Movies.* The aim is to reach and satisfy as wide a youth audience as possible; there must, therefore, be a range of identification figures, and no minority group...must entirely be neglected...

4. *Hunter/Hunted.* Two male figures recur...often in close juxtapositions—the one who "knows all about it" and the one who doesn't. A central plot thread concerns the male virgin who has to "get laid." ...The basic pattern is the same: male as hunter, female as hunted, male as looker, female as looked at.

5. *The Rejection of Homosexuality.* There are no gay teenagers in America: such, at least, is the films' implicit message...The films never acknowledge the possibility of teenage homosexual behavior... (Wood 347-348).

Being a mainstream teen movie, it is not surprising that several facets of *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* are consistent with those Wood outlines. While many scenes take place in school, one does not observe a character crack a book until Mr. Hand spoon feeds Spicoli the Platt Amendment towards the end of the film. The only activity the teenagers seem to do willingly at school is gaze at one another longingly, although this activity cannot be followed by more intimate, physical contact because these gazes occur while they are at their lockers or hovering over the water fountain, under the close scrutiny of their teachers. As for the suppression of parents, the one time we see one of these mythical creatures, it is only for a split second when Stacey's mother tucks her into bed. Their absence, however, does not imply that they do not present a threat to their children's sex lives. Stacey asks Brad to conceal the post-deflowering roses Ron sends her in the trunk of his car and, in another scene, tells Mark and Mike that they will have to go home before her mother catches them frolicking with her and Linda in the pool. While the film fails to represent minority groups, with the exception of the African American football star and his younger brother, it does portray characters from every clique in the typical high school. Brad is the big man on campus, Spicoli the pothead surfer, Mike the smooth talker, Linda the golden girl, and so on. The final way in which *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* conforms to the terms of the '80s high school cycle is its treatment of homosexuality. No gay teenagers are portrayed, and homosexuality is treated as though it were something to be stigmatized. At the beginning of the film, a student attaches a sign reading "I AM A HOMO" to another student's back. From this scene, it is clear that homosexual behavior is acknowledged only as something to be ridiculed.

As for the hunter/hunted category, the two male figures Wood discusses—one who "knows all about it," that is sex, and one who does not—are irrefutably depicted in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. These are Mike and Mark, respectively. Constantly urging Mark to be more aggressive with women, Mike schools Mark in daring etiquette, advising, "You call the shots," "order dinner for the both of you," and "never let a lady know you like her." Mark repeatedly follows Mike's advice, awkwardly asking Stacey for her phone number and ordering her knoekwurst at a hokey Bavarian restaurant. Yet while Mike and Mark adequately fulfill the roles of hunter, they are not the only characters that do. One other pair has a similar relationship and, interestingly, this pair is female.

Like Mike, Linda also "knows all about it," giving Stacey, who does not, tips on how to flirt with older guys ("If he says something funny, laugh like it's the funniest thing you've ever heard"), how to deal with them when they do not call her again, and, most notably, how to perform oral sex. During lunch in the cafeteria, the two girls discuss the fact that Stacey has never given a guy a "blow job." Grabbing a carrot off her tray, Linda proceeds to demonstrate her method, pushing the carrot in and out of her mouth, encouraging Stacey to do the same. Anxiously, Stacey practices while Linda critiques her. This scene provides a prime example of Stacey's actively seeking out sexual pleasure. Although an argument could be made that Stacey is priming herself for an act that is usually associated with male pleasure, another could be made that some females take just as much pleasure in performing it as males do receiving it. Also, because she practices the "blow job" within her and Linda's own private, female space devoid of any male "screen surrogates" (Mulvey 34) with whose gaze the male spectator could identify, the scene stands out as one in which female desire takes precedence. True, a group of boys at another table laugh and clap upon noticing what the girls are doing, yet the girls, who had not detected them beforehand, stop as soon as they register the presence of an audience, blatantly rejecting the position of masquerade.

Not only does Heckerling allow her female characters the pursuit of pleasure within a private, female sphere, she also, both visually and textually, films them to be possessors of "the gaze," which is customarily ascribed solely to the male in mainstream cinema, in turn making the female spectator possessor of the gaze. During the beginning credits, a shot of two females looking Brad up and down appreciatively is shown. Another shot occurring thereafter depicts a row of posteriors crammed into skin-tight blue jeans. At first, this shot "looks like the typical sexist cliché until one realizes that the asses are not identifiable as female" (Wood 350)—in fact they appear to be male. Spicoli and his male entourage's chests are habitually shot in fetishizing close up, while the camera zooms in on Brad's shaking butt while he washes his ear. All of these images clearly intimate that a woman is behind the camera. It would be extremely difficult to imagine a straight male filmmaker featuring such images or ones comparable in a mainstream film. Instead, there would be a shot of Brad checking out the two females, another of female posteriors crammed into miniskirts, another



of female breasts, and yet another of a female's boogying butt, with no fetishizing shots of males and their body parts.

Yet what makes the female as spectator position in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* so inoffensive and therefore dissimilar to the common male as spectator position in patriarchal films is Heckerling's effort not to alienate male members of the viewing audience. For every shot in which a female sizes up a male appreciatively, there is another shot in which a male does the same to a female. In the opening credits, before the two girls gaze at Brad, Mike eyes a girl in the arcade. While Heckerling includes the traveling shot of the row of male butts, she also supplies a shot of a girl's butt, around which a T-shirt bearing the words "ASSASSINATE LINCOLN" is tied. But even more so than these shots, one scene in particular illustrates Heckerling's compassion for the male spectator.

In the changing room scene, before Mike and Stacey have sex, Stacey is at first placed in the dominant role, initiating the kiss and asking Mike to take off his clothes. Obviously uncomfortable, Mike says, "You first." Stacey answers, "At the same time," marking the beginning of Heckerling's equal treatment of both the male and the female. Next is a shot of Stacey taking off her shirt, then one of Mike taking off his. Then a shot is shown of Stacey taking off her bikini bottoms, and then one of Mike taking off his pants. When they are finished having sex, a shot of Stacey naked is followed by a shot of Mike naked. Not once in this scene is the female body fetishized to a greater extent than the male body or vice versa. And, therefore, not once is the female spectator's desire indulged at the expense of the male, or the other way around. In this sense, Heckerling deviates from the patriarchal mainstream genre formula by refusing to favor one sex over the other.

The only time Heckerling might, and justifiably should, offend the straight male spectator is when she punishes his screen surrogate for fetishizing the female body without depicting a female doing the same in the male body to equalize it. This punishment can be identified in the film's dream sequence, in which Spicoli fetishizes women, and in Heckerling's mockery of castration anxiety that follows scenes in which males cruelly treat females as objects.

Spicoli is the male in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* to be punished for regarding the female as an object in a dream sequence. The dream begins with a shot of a surfer, who we are to believe is Spicoli, riding a humongous wave. In the next frame, he wears a goofy smile on his face, hot pink zinc oxide on his nose, and a lei around his neck. Standing with a tanned, bikini-clad woman on each arm, Spicoli answers questions posed to him by a television anchorman while the women giggle and flash seductive looks at the camera. In the background is an obvious screen upon which is the projected image of the ocean. Spicoli answers the anchorman with "dude" laden, barely intelligible stonerspeak as to how he won the surf competition, while the women respond to him as though he were the most witty, clever person on earth. They are obviously pretending to be interested in Spicoli only because he won the surfing competition. This dream only lasts a few seconds, for Spicoli's obnoxious little brother rudely awakens him.

The dream sequence is constructed to flagrantly satirize the patriarchal position of male as spectator. The women are silent during the entire dream, demonstrating that "man [in this case Spicoli] can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman" (Mulvey 29). The screen behind the characters bolsters the point that the fantasy Spicoli projects onto the women in his dream is remote from reality. "The screen may be defined as a surface on which to project skeletal images of the film's stars and the attendant promise that they will be quite literally fleshed out, but it also functions as a barrier, a boundary line to be transgressed" (Mayne 28). While he is dreaming, Spicoli believes that the women are truly hanging on both his arms and his every word; the boundary lies somewhere between sleeping and waking. When Spicoli's younger brother rouses him by shrieking, the boy drags Spicoli out of the fantasy world of the screen, back to the side of reality.

Heckerling could have easily rendered the post-surf competition scene as an event that truly occurs in Spicoli's life, which a straight male mainstream film director would have undoubtedly done. Yet, because she depicts it as a dream, she reassembles the straight male spectator with the fetishized image of woman to which he is accustomed and has come to believe is entitled, only to punish him for taking pleasure in this fetish by ending it abruptly without warning. This leaves the straight male, who is used to filling the "active [role] of forwarding the story, making things happen" (Mulvey 34) feeling powerless and possibly castrated.

The second tactic Heckerling employs to punish straight males who objectify women is the mocking of the male castration anxiety that incites them to view women in such a way. She does this by incorporating shots of patently phallic objects in compromising positions directly after scenes in which males attempt to fetishize or objectify women. Two instances of this tactic are the shot that follows the clapping boys' interruption of Linda and Stacey's "blow job" practice and the shot that follows Mike's quickly leaving Stacey dejectedly lying on the couch after he prematurely ejaculates.

In the first instance, although Linda and Stacey cease practicing their "blow job" techniques once they realize they have an audience, this does not excuse the fact that the boys were attempting to fetishize them. In the shot immediately following the one of the whooping, applauding males, Heckerling depicts a dead snake, pristinely preserved in formaldehyde. This image seems to foreshadow how the straight male will feel (i.e., castrated) after the interruption of Spicoli's dream sequence, which occurs later in the narrative, while asserting, "If you continue to fetishize the female, as you attempted to do through your male surrogate in the preceding shot, this is what shall happen to you."

In the second instance, although Stacey's body is rendered as being visually equal fetish-wise to Mike's body, Mike nevertheless attempts to objectify her. As soon as he has an orgasm, Mike leaves immediately, completely disregarding that Stacey did not have an orgasm. He used her body for his pleasure without giving her pleasure in

return, which is essentially what the straight male subject does when he gazes at the female object. Again, Heckerling does not condone this treatment. In the next shot, Linda and Stacey saw furiously at both ends of a gigantic salami while they discuss the acceptable amount of time it should take for a teenage boy to "come." The message this shot conveys is similar to the one the preserved snake asserts: "Objectify women, and this will be your fate."

Besides creating a spectator position for the female and punishing the male in the cases that he fetishizes or objectifies the female, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* depicts a female relationship unlike the one that is habitually portrayed in patriarchal mainstream films. While the females in Hollywood films directed by straight males are usually pitted against each other, competing for the same male and remaining perpetually divided, Stacey and Linda are united, especially in all matters concerning the opposite sex. Although Linda already has a boyfriend in Chicago, eliminating her as potential competition to Stacey, she wards off any female competition that could stand in Stacey's way of finding a boyfriend. When another waitress at the pizza parlor attempts to wait on Ron, Linda rebukes her, saying, "No, that's Stacey's section." When Stacey points out a Pat Benetar lookalike and asks Linda if that look attracts boys, Linda exclaims, "Are you crazy? You're much prettier than her." Linda also retaliates against anyone who would knowingly hurt Stacey. When Mike neglects to give Stacey money for the abortion and to drive her to the clinic, Linda scrawls the words "LITTLE PRICK" on Mike's car and locker. In return, Stacey advises Linda on how to word her break-up letter to her boyfriend and encourages her to forget about him and date new people. Heckerling constructs Linda and Stacey's interaction as being the healthy, united friendship all women should have with each other.

Although Heckerling successfully uses *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* as a conduit for feminist discourse in the ways discussed above, this is not enough to establish the film as a wholly feminist work for some feminist film critics. Such critics maintain that a film's ending either legitimizes or disqualifies the feminist implications contained in the rest of the film. Fortunately, the ending does not undermine the feminist discourse laboriously generated in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. Adhering to her method of at once part fulfilling and part undermining the generic expectations and formula of the mainstream teen movie genre, Heckerling boldly voices her feminist message right up to the closing credits.

Wood observes that the ending of *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* picks up where *American Graffiti*, the quintessential patriarchal mainstream teen movie, left off.

Heckerling, in a single simple gesture, quietly rectifies the sexism of *American Graffiti*. Lucas ended his film with captions succinctly synthesizing the destinies of his four male characters; the implication was that the females were either of no consequence or so dependent on the men as to have no destinies of their own (Wood 349).

Heckerling demonstrates that the female characters in her film indeed have destinies. Linda attends college and lives with her abnormal psychology professor, while Stacey is enjoying "a passionate love affair" with Mark, although they have not "gone all the way." Some might argue that because Linda and Stacey are connected with males, their fates are no different than those of the females in *American Graffiti*. Yet Linda and Stacey obtain what they have been pursuing throughout the entire film. Linda has desired a relationship with a "marute" male, while Stacey declares that she really does not want sex (which she most likely associates with premature ejaculation and being objectified); she wants a relationship. In fulfilling their desires, Linda and Stacey circumvent the negative traits they despise in the males who have fetishized and objectified them. Also, because their desires are fulfilled, Linda and Stacey are shown as filling the active role of forwarding the story and making things happen, a role that is filled solely by the male spectator in mainstream films directed by straight males. Thus, Heckerling reinforces the female as spectator position she worked so hard to cultivate in the rest of the film and establishes the film as one that is comprehensively a conduit for feminist discourse.

Whether or not mainstream Hollywood films directed by women can be considered instruments of feminist discourse is a topic that feminists feverishly debate. Many such critics, endorsing Mulvey's psychoanalytic attacks against narrative cinema and visual pleasure, argue that there is no room within what they envision to be the claustrophobic confines of mainstream film to foster feminist discourse, while other critics are more liberal in their views. Some believe that interruptions in the narrative can occur to modify the ending of the film, making it less patriarchal than most, while others maintain that a feminist discourse can at once part fulfill, part undermine the mainstream genre formula to create a comprehensive feminist message. Critically analyzing Heckerling's *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, which generates feminist discourse within the mainstream narrative structure without creating an impression of overall incoherence, it is extremely difficult to not accept the latter school of feminist thought concerning mainstream films directed by women.

While it conforms to the terms of the mainstream '80s high school genre, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* at the same time digresses from them in two radical ways. First, the female as well as the male is permitted the position of "hunter," while the male as well as the female is the "hunted," rather than the first role being occupied strictly by the male and the second occupied solely by the female, as these roles are in wholly patriarchal teen movies. Secondly, the female is allowed to be the "looker," while the male is permitted to be the "looked at," while neither sex is favored at the expense of the other, as the male is favored at the expense of the female in patriarchal mainstream films. Moreover, the film reinforces the female as spectator position by punishing the male in the instances that he treats the female as object by interrupting his fetishistic fantasies. Also, the film mocks the very psychoanalytic cause of female fetishization and objectification by visually implying castration. Furthermore, the female relationship, which is commonly depicted as competitive and divided in pa-

riarchal mainstream films, is portrayed as healthy and unified in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. Finally, the ending, which many feminist film theorists believe can either disqualify or justify the feminist discourse contained in the film theretofore, does not undermine the feminist message voiced in the rest of the film, irrefutably designating *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* as a vehicle for feminist discourse.

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LAFAYETTE PANSIES



## Globalizing Domestic Firms: One Example

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*Note: The firm name, Vascular Medical Devices Inc., its competitors, and employee names have all been changed. Due to time constraints, permission was never sought from the original corporation and actors.*

The world of business has changed forever. The old adage that in business it's a "dog eats dog world" is even truer today; ultra powerful Dohermans such as Microsoft are devouring Chihuahuas such as Lorus every day. Business operates at a whole new speed due to globalization. The postal service is too slow; the speed of the Internet is merely adequate. The age of the Internet, Concorde, and container shipping has brought about a "widening, deepening and speeding up of global interconnectedness" (Held, et al. 14). Because they possess the human and physical capital needed to facilitate this new form of business, the US, Western Europe, and Japan, pushed this global economic integration. Large conglomerations within these regions initiated this move towards economic globalization that left many traditionally domestic firms at the mercy of their endless technical, financial, and human resources. In this context, the "golden straightjacket" that Friedman said bound states also bounds domestic firms (101). They could jump into the game and try to compete with the conglomerates on a global forum with limited resources, or remain in their traditional forum and risk being displaced once the conglomerates expand. They either had to run with the big dogs or snare on the porch. Adapt or be eaten. Corporate Darwinism at its finest. In the words of economist Peter Drucker, "You can either take action, or you can hang back and hope for a miracle. Miracles are great, but they are so unpredictable."

In 1964 Dr. George M. Sampson formed Vascular Medical Devices Inc. (VMD) as a regional company specializing in vascular imaging (VMD). Throughout their thirty-six year history, they have grown to become the market leader in the production and distribution of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) equipment, medical coils, injectors, and syringes. By the mid 1980s, VMD had cornered the US market. Unlike many other companies that found themselves on the brink of jumping into the ring with these large conglomerations, VMD, under the courageous leadership

of Bryson P. Mittelson, was able to effectively globalize and save the company from the jaws of more powerful medical firms at home and abroad.

As the company grew, Japan and the European Union became important growth opportunities. VMD had to expand to meet its growth objectives of increasing sales by fifteen percent annually (Young). The genius lay not in the move itself, but in the ability to recognize the situation and allocate resources effectively enough to enter the global market successfully. It was a risk, but a risk that VMD could not afford not to take.

Roughly fifteen years after VMD made the initial push towards seriously competing in foreign markets, they have established direct sales, service and distribution operations in France, Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, the Middle East, and Japan. VMD has also established final assembly and tests in the Netherlands as well as Israel. Assembly in the Netherlands established a central location within Europe for distribution and allowed VMD to acquire an enormous tax break throughout much of Europe. A manufacturing plant was developed in Israel because of the significant tariff breaks throughout the EU if a good is shipped through Israel and value is added (Ryker).

As a result of this globalization, VMD sales and market share has increased rapidly. Currently, the firm has a market share of seventy-five percent in the US and fifty percent in the rest of the world, for a total market share of sixty-five percent worldwide (VMD). Starting in 1985, VMD sales have increased throughout the EU on average of fifteen percent annually, while sales in Japan have increased six percent annually on average.

Unfortunately, global expansion has costs. In 2000, currency exchange rates cost VMD \$175,000 because of the fluctuating Euro. Analysts had anticipated the Euro would exchange at a rate of 1.06 to the dollar; however, the Euro is hovering at an exchange rate of .86, twenty percent less than projections. To ease the burden of fluctuating exchange rates, they used two tactics: using local currencies for local selling expenses and production, and VMD also hedges the exchange rate by purchasing local currencies when they are weak and selling them when they are strong thereby eliminating the extremes of both profit and loss (Davidson).

Many other challenges exist on the global front. Managing worldwide operations is difficult due to time zones, cultural differences, language, and hiring/firing policy discrepancies. Along the same lines, all local laws, regulations, and cultural preferences within specific markets must be recognized when developing a product. Products sold in the EU must be approved by the CE, a European equivalent to Underwriter's Laboratories that stipulates all products must be offered in the local language of every EU country in which that product is sold. Patent laws also differ widely between countries, which forces VMD to focus on research and development as their primary function.

Economic and political instability within specific localities pose a grave threat. Friendly governments can turn unfriendly and nationalize public assets. Specifically



regarding their operations in Israel, VMD keeps a constant lookout for wars because they threaten private assets in that region; the current military activities in and around Israel have many executives within the company considering the possibility of decreasing their operations in Israel or pulling out altogether (Ryker). Many economies that offer the largest opportunity for growth such as Japan, Germany and France erect considerable barriers to the import of goods. Countries that aren't as closed are under continual pressure to restrict the influx of products in order to support local firms.

Further consideration to individual markets must be given to the judicial and political infrastructures that exist, particularly throughout Latin American and Asia. SMN, a producer of card key systems, is forced to bribe several bureaucrats and public officials for every shipment that enters Mexico. The judicial system in Mexico is in shambles. Contracts are violated as much as they are honored, creating obstacles to trade. Even larger companies with tremendous political and economic power are susceptible to the same types of harassment.

To employ Friedman's analogies, Mexico has the proper hardware (free-markets), and operating system (DOScapital 4.0), but they lack the software to make these systems operate effectively (151). In Mexico there are no processes for judicial review, contract laws, or commercial laws. This forces companies such as SMN, VMD, and even IBM to forego the largest metropolitan area in the world, Mexico City. Essentially, Mexico has been stagnate in the same "kleptocracy" for several decades. This impairs not only their economy, but also prevents many companies from operating within their borders (153).

Beyond the inherent threats of operating in foreign markets, there are more delicate situations within specific regions that pose a significant challenge to foreign firms. On a smaller scale, globalization brings added competition from domestic firms. In Germany, VMD competes with three or four other firms for the same market (Young). These local firms have an inherent edge over foreign firms because they are able to more easily tailor their products to the domestic consumer. As a result, localization has become the key to success on a global scale. One-size fits all policies no longer exist due to differing culture, regulation, and laws. If VMD is not willing or able to manufacture a product that satisfies the local palate, someone else will. A prerequisite of competing globally is the ability to operate successfully on a domestic scale.

Because of the need to take account of the population of individual markets, VMD has had to change policies drastically. Traditionally, they employed graduates of Carnegie-Mellon University, West Virginia University, and the University of Pittsburgh (Ryker). Localization within specific global regions requires that they employ natives; people who have an intimate knowledge of the culture and people that will be purchasing the products. While these universities continue to play an integral role in forming the face of the company, VMD recruits employees from the University of Technology in Munich, Technological Institute of Aachen, King's College London,

Monash University in Melbourne and Kansai Gaidai University in Japan. International students with specialties in various humanities are specifically in favor because they are able to fit well into marketing or design teams to integrate a product with the specific components that a particular locality desires. However, VMDs' backbone, their engineering employees, are still mainly procured from the US and Germany.

Unfortunately, these changes are not enough to provide security in the global market. VMD will eventually have to move from their current status as an adapter to that of a shaper because of its specific market. Their customer base will only grow because the gradual aging of the US, Western Europe and Japan will require an expansion of quantity and quality of vascular imaging systems. However, this does not guarantee VMD a place in the market. Large medical conglomerates such as Global Pharmaceuticals have relatively weak imaging departments that cannot turn a profit, but they compensate for this with a significant global market share in other VMD. With this added capital, these conglomerations are able to dump a nearly endless supply of capital into their imaging department, or in a sever case, they could attempt to merely buy out VMD after an agreeable board and management team moves in.

To safeguard against this, VMD needs to improve in several areas. First and foremost it must place a stranglehold grip on the US market. The majority of the serious competition comes from companies operating within the US, specifically Youngsteens-Bernham and Global Pharmaceuticals (Ryker). VMD sales in the US account for sixty-seven percent of sales worldwide, so maintaining their current market share of seventy-five percent in the US is the single most important factor in terms of measuring the welfare of the firm. Most of this figure comes from the sale of syringes. Medical procedure within the US requires hospitals to use a different syringe for each injection, and since syringe technology is standardized, it is a volatile market. Injector technology, on the other hand, is very diverse. VMD currently produces the best injector on the market. Due to cost differences between syringes, hospitals took to purchasing different syringes to use with VMD injectors earlier in the decade. Recently, several very important steps have been taken to negate this situation. Foremost among them, they patented a particular connection between their syringes and injectors that requires VMD syringes to be used with VMD injectors (Ryker). This move effectively secured a hold on the US market, but better injectors and more innovative syringes still need to be developed in order to offset the research and development of competing firms.

Beyond the domestic market, VMD must also expand distribution within Western Europe and Japan because of their "graying" populations. Vascular imaging within these countries will become extremely important as time passes; therefore, VMD should turn a serious eye towards developing production centers within Japan and the European Union. Currently, this possibility is being looked at very closely. VMD's infrastructure within both regions seems developed enough to support new manu-

facturing centers that will allow VMD to sidestep a large portion of the tariffs that they incur to distribute throughout those regions. Recognizing this, VMD executives have been in serious talks with the governments of Japan, Germany, and France about the possibility of opening plants in those areas (Ynung).

Finally, to bump the status of their company from an adapter to a shaper, VMD must work arduously to realize the profits from many areas in which their distribution borders on non-existent. Distribution on a large scale should be implemented to countries in Asia that have the resources and per capita income to make use of vascular imaging such as Singapore, South Korea, and India. The same applies to countries in South America such as Brazil and Argentina. The resources and current climate in the Southeastern region of Australia is also a great potential market for vascular imaging technology. Some Eastern European nations such as Austria and the Czech Republic also seem like perfect staging grounds for increased distribution, although with the EU holding as much market power as it does, it seems as if Eastern Europe will have to follow the EU. Mexico and Russia are also good possibilities for increased distribution of vascular imaging technology; however, these governments have not repaired their economies to the point that extensive business there would be economically feasible. Overall, with VMD developing a stronger grip on the US and growing leaps and bounds within the EU and Japan, these regions hold the real potential for the rise of VMD as a shaper in the new world order.

To facilitate this type of growth, VMD needs to implement some internal changes. Worldwide management must be streamlined. Executives at company headquarters need to relinquish some of their power to managers at ground zero in order to localize their products. Internal company economics need to be organized and incorporated more effectively to deal with fluctuations in the exchange rates. New recruiting techniques have to be geared towards more aggressively pursuing the most talented people both within the US and abroad. Finally, and most importantly, VMD must continue to innovate on the same level that they have for the past thirty-six years. Companies are built upon the products they sell, not the quality of their organization and integration. It seems like a tall order. Operating business in the current climate is much akin to cooking a five-star meal on short order, but that is what it takes to stay one step ahead of the competitor.

Gordon Gekko stated it well on Wall Street when he said, "if you aren't in, then you're out." Maybe Thomas Friedman describes the situation best by using his analogy of the golden straitjacket: companies and governments must adapt to a new changing global marketplace (106). It takes a lot of courage and sacrifice for traditionally domestic firms to move into the global market, but the move is necessary. Eat or be eaten. Wear the golden straitjacket or don't wear a jacket at all. Globalization has treated VMD well, with an average growth in sales of fifteen percent worldwide after going global and projected growth in sales on average of thirteen percent through 2005. The institutions and infrastructures are in place throughout much of the world for VMD Inc. to implement the needed distribution and production to

make them a global shaper. Still, many problems must be overcome such as currency exchange rates, worldwide management, and employment practices. Stagnation cannot be tolerated. Growth is necessary to sustain a business. To use the words of Peter Drucker once again, "There is the risk you cannot afford to take, and there is the risk you cannot afford not to take." For VMD, as it is for many other traditionally global firms, this is a risk that they cannot afford not to take.

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## *Deathsong: Capitalist Marx of Salvation*

STEPHANIE NELSON

Su Xiaokang wrote:

People pride themselves on the fact that it [the Great Wall] is the only feat of human engineering visible to astronauts on the moon. People even wish to use it as a symbol of China's strength. And yet, if the Great Wall could speak, it would frankly tell its Chinese grandchildren that it is a great and tragic gravestone forged by historical destiny. It can by no means represent strength, initiative, and glory; it can only represent an isolationist, conservative and incompetent defense and a cowardly lack of aggression. Because of its great size and long history, it has deeply imprinted its arrogance and self-delusion in the souls of our people. Alas, O Great Wall, why do we still want to praise you? (Bodman 1991:150)

Despite a tradition of national pride in the Great Wall, in this quote Xiaokang speaks only with a feeling of disgust towards the Wall. This sort of opposition to China partially demonstrates why *Deathsong of the River* was banned from television and denounced in public in 1988.

Chinese authorities accused the producers of *Deathsong of the River* of deliberately arousing the student democracy movement demonstrated in Tiananmen in June of 1989. Indeed, the makers of *Deathsong* played active roles in the Tiananmen protests – they were of the group who called for the release of political prisoners, for public mobilization behind the students' efforts, and additionally, they attempted to initiate provisions to the Chinese constitution.

After being accused, three of the creators fled the country, while three others were sentenced to prison (Bodman 1991:22-23). During the entire process of creating *Deathsong*, the creators were intently aware of the possible consequences. "What made us the most apprehensive was whether or not a television piece including so many controversial topics could in the end be broadcast, and whether our labor, which we felt to be of inestimable value, could ever appear before society...indeed,

apprehension was our constant companion (Bodman 1991:15).“ stated the twenty-five year old director, Xia Jun (Shyah Joon). As intellectuals, however, they were driven to continue: “Modern intellectuals are different from the literati and scholars in the tradition. In addition to their knowledge, they should represent the conscience of society, have a lofty sense of responsibility and sense of mission, and finally, have a highly rational and critical spirit (Bodman 1991:17),” stated one of *Deathsong*’s unofficial advisors, Bao Zunxin (Bow ZoonSheen).

*Deathsong of the River* incited the Chinese people to deeply question China’s state in the world. After airing once, the national television station was flooded with letters of high appraisal. Some, however, were of deep opposition. The affect cut across every social stratum; the letters came in from intellectuals and officials, officers in the army, armed police, workers, young peasants, and students. Summer camps were organized for youth to debate the claims of *Deathsong*, competitions were held for the best essays written on *Deathsong*, and the government gathered highly respected scholars to collaborate on public criticisms of *Deathsong of the River*.

“There is a TV series named He Shang [“Huh Shaang”] which describes the great Chinese nation and our Yellow River as not having a single good quality. As I see it, this film curses the Yellow River and the Great Wall; it defames our great people and the descendants of the Yellow Emperor and Fire Emperor,” stated China’s Vice President Wang Zhen (“Wahng Junn”), in the first published criticism of *Deathsong of the River* (in late September of 1988). Not long after this publication, it was announced that *Deathsong* would not be re-broadcast, nor would the script be reprinted.

After watching *Deathsong*, one would imagine the Western world as an eternally prosperous utopian state. As many cultures in the world have given birth to a belief system with promises of nirvana, heaven, enlightenment, and utopian visions of peace and social harmony, we can see how this search for a higher level of existence takes many different forms. While the Chinese Communist Party seeks this utopian state through Marxism, the makers of *Deathsong* fervently reject it. It is through capitalism and democracy that the makers of *Deathsong* seek salvation. In doing so, the makers of *Deathsong of the River* have ignored the contradictions between democracy and capitalism and have minimized the harsh realities of capitalism. Because of this, their claim has been both welcomed and intensely feared in China throughout the past century. This television series incited a cultural fury and opened a door through which we can begin to understand the complexities of the ideological plurality of the Chinese people, government, and cultural history. It also provides a more culturally rich understanding of the ongoing dialogue between Western ideas and Chinese tradition.

### Exploring the Content of *Deathsong of the River*

Su Xiaokang (Soo ShaoKahng), who finished the editing of *Deathsong*, stated, “*River Elegy* [*Deathsong*] is not only from a few producers’ points of view; rather, it is a representative viewpoint from the heated background of Chinese intellectuals in

the 1980's who strongly advocated an open policy for China, known as 'The Cultural Fever of the '80's' (Su 2000:1)."

Each part of *Deathsong* is layered with meaning—allegorical, historical, academic, and emotional. Each part also tackles a huge theoretical problem. The producers have chosen the most representative and vivid symbols to relay their ideas—in particular the Yellow River, The Great Wall, and the dragon. *Deathsong* speaks in reference to historical events, yet the images of Mao Zedong, the Cultural Revolution, the People's Liberation Army, the poor countryside, the Yellow River, as well as Western TV advertisements (Wrigley's Doublemint Gum and others), are largely of the recent past. This juxtaposition exemplifies the allegorical nature of the series.

*Deathsong*, on the whole, is very complex; the simplified summarization below certainly does not encompass all of the meaning. It is drawn from my own interpretation, that of Richard Bodman and Pin Wan (the editors/translators/partial authors of *A Reader's Guide to the Chinese TV Series He Shang*), and also from brief correspondences between Su Xiaokang and myself.

*Deathsong of the River*, a six part television series, aired in its original form once in June of 1988, and in a politically toned down form again in August of 1988. The title, *Deathsong of the River*, is the English translation of "He Shang," "He," meaning "river," and "Shang," meaning "to die early," have been translated as *River Elegy*, *The River Dies Young*, *River Dirge*, and as *Deathsong of the River*. In keeping with the attempt to more vividly reflect the heated controversy sparked by this TV series, I have chosen to use the translation *Deathsong of the River*.

*Deathsong of the River* draws from a total of thirteen academic themes; among these are Marx's discussion of the Asiatic mode of production (a civilization founded on the need for water control); Francis Bacon's discussion of China's four great inventions; Plekhanov's idea that the stage of the market economy cannot be skipped over; Jin Guantao's (Jinn Gwandow) 'super-stability hypothesis'; and Deng Xiaoping's (Dung Shaoping) thought on reform and economic liberalization.

These themes are woven together throughout *Deathsong of the River* to create a pattern that reads like the four noble truths of Buddhism (evaluate, analyze, solve, act):

1.) China's national psychology is backwards and cyclically destructive. It has miserably failed on a global as well as intra-national level.

2.) Ancient tradition (Confucianism) and Communism (a closed economy, forced unification) are to blame for China's backwardness.

3.) By adopting Western politics of capitalism (a market economy open to the rest of the world), China can attain prosperity.

4.) The path to prosperity requires the Chinese people to fervently reject such backward means to a desolate future; the people must take hold of their own destiny and open China's doors to capitalism and democracy of the industrialized West.

*Deathsong of the River* returns to this pattern in each of the six parts:

Part one, "Searching for a Dream," sets the atmosphere of dissatisfaction with

China's state: "Has our current state of mind been created by our past century of history, in which we were always the helpless victim? Perhaps this is so, but not entirely. What is hidden behind these phenomena is the soul of a people in pain. Its entire pain lies in the fact that our civilization has declined (Bodman 1991:140).

"Searching for a Dream," uses the dragon as a symbol of the Chinese people in order to comment on a culture developed around the Yellow River. According to part one, the Yellow River created China; its water sustained life while its challenging environment required the Chinese people to invent ways to survive. This resulted in early technologies such as water control, the calendar system, land measurement, agricultural plowing, animal husbandry, ceramics, and metallurgy, all of which reached maturity an entire millennium before the West. Yet historically, these things have been adopted by the West and used against the Chinese people.

The Dragon King was the force that controlled the river. Offerings were made to satisfy him and bring about a good agricultural season, and ceremonies were held in celebration of successful seasons in which people made fun of the dragon, which offered a way to vent anger toward the Dragon King. This double-sided relationship of fear and worship is akin to that of the emperors and the Chinese people throughout history. The dragon is seen as the tyrant of the natural world, and the emperor as the tyrant of the human world.

The claim is that since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, China has repeatedly failed to respond to challenges from the West. It is time to awaken from the cycle of acceptance of the Dragon king rulers.

Part two, "Destiny," dissects the Great Wall as the icon of an inward-looking, defensive society. It presents a view of the Great Wall that runs contrary to the long held pride in it as a symbol of the strength and unification of the Chinese people. China's policy has always been to keep its doors shut; however, in order to advance in the world, China must open its gates to absorb the wealth of democracy, science, and capitalism.

The third part, "The Light of the Spirit," emphasizes the necessity of opening up to the world's cultures in order to enrich China's culture and fuel the creative spirit that is otherwise suffocated. It speaks of the dismal state which China, source of the four great inventions of paper, printing, gunpowder and the compass, has found itself in: not only has the Western world been revolutionized by these discoveries, leaving China behind, but they have used these very discoveries to turn around and invade China. Meanwhile, China was too busy repressing its citizens by confining knowledge and forcing the unifying of thought. Wang Luxiang leaves us with this pleading thought: "May history never again play tricks on the Chinese intellectuals (Bodman 1991:157)."

Part four, "The New Era," comments on economic reform process and problems. Its claim is that China never reached an industrial state because peasants had no social cohesiveness to challenge authority. The interplay between religious beliefs and sociological influence rears its head here: passive acceptance of one's often-dis-



mal fate runs throughout ancient Chinese religion. Chinese novels and films, such as "New Year's Sacrifice" (Sang Hu, 1957), and *Family* (Ba Jin, 1931) illustrate this theme. This passive worldview invites serious problems; it has loyally aided in corruption throughout China's history. Unquestioned, emperors skimmed off surplus wealth. There was no concept of market economy, and the system perpetuated itself.

Part four concludes by noting that China ranks 20<sup>th</sup> in Gross National Product in the world (in 1988), and the serious problem of uneven distribution of wealth plagues the Chinese economy. Reforming an economy such as China's involves fundamental shifts in the psychology of the people; it is by no means a simple task.

"Sorrow and Worry," part five, begins with nature posing as a metaphor for society. It suggests that society is a 'super-stable structure,' meaning this: just as the dikes of the Yellow River collapse and are repeatedly repaired, meanwhile leaving the people to await the next collapse, the multitude of dynasties throughout China's history have repeatedly collapsed and been replaced by new, but structurally the same, dynasties. The dikes in the Yellow River represent the dynamic of 'great unification' which unfailingly bound society together and were determined by the Confucian principle of having only one ruler, specifically a man. However this structure was particularly susceptible to corruption, which is what continually led to the collapse. Su asks: "Why are we always entrapped in such a cyclically-repeating fate (Bodman 1991:165)?" Su states that the threat of flooding is always hanging over the head of the Chinese people like the Sword of Damocles.

Jin Guantao, of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, interviewed in *Deathsong*, stated, "I believe that the Chinese people can, while reflecting on their history, truly come to understand their history, absorb its experiences, and then transform them into a kind of historical wisdom, then the forthcoming twenty-first century will be a new starting point from which the Chinese people can head towards prosperity."

"Sorrow and Worry" ends with these words of Su: "We have finally started to experiment with reforms in the political structure, no matter what kind of resistance and danger this reform may encounter, we can only move forward. Behind us stretch endless floods and endless turmoil. We must move forward and break through that repeating historical cycle."

The prevailing metaphor in part six, "Blueness," is that of yellow and blue world civilizations. Yellow societies are agricultural in nature, continental, closed, and defensive. Blue societies are open, accepting of diversity, aggressive, and industrial. Ancient Greece and modern Europe serve as models. China is classified as yellow. China, then, represented by the Yellow River, inevitably flows into the Blue Ocean of democracy and capitalism. Through this metaphor we are instilled with a feeling of romantic and inevitable evolution into Westernization.

### **Deathsong in its Cultural Context**

*Deathsong of the River* was created by a group of scholars, writers, historians and economists. Among them, Su Xiaokang, a well known writer of social-oriented jour-

nalistic fiction, Wang Luxiang (Wahng Loo shiahng), a philosopher on the staff at Beijing Normal College, Xia Jun, the film director, and Zhang Gang (Jahng Gahng), a member of the Research Institute on the Reform of the Economic Structure (a government think tank), were several of the most deeply engaged.

The mission of *Deathsong* was considered an extension of the May Fourth movement in 1919 in Tiananmen. The 1919 movement was provoked by the outcome of the Versailles Peace Treaty, in which the Chinese province Shandong, a former German territory, was assigned to Japan. Students, workers, and merchants mobilized in Tiananmen and other cities around China, protesting this decision. Directly preceding this event, a new generation of intellectuals who had trained abroad came back with criticisms on Confucianism as the culprit of China's weakness. A famous writer of this period, Lu Xun (Loo Shoon), subversively paired the Confucius tradition with the act of cannibalism in his short story, "Diary of a Madman." These intellectuals took the task of China's enlightenment upon them, calling for "Wholesale Westernization" (Pin 1991: 81)."

We see this theme running throughout Chinese society over the decades since. This youth-driven movement toward a new society is illuminated again in novels such as *Family*, written by Ba Jin in 1931, in which three young brothers wish to break free from the oppressive tradition of societal values and chose their own life paths. *Deathsong* full-heartedly takes on this mission. This aspect was later to become one of the main points of criticism.

During the ten-year period directly preceding the film, Deng Xiaoping had taken office as China's President. Deng turned China around nearly 180 degrees, opening its doors wide.

During this period, Deng took the liberty to "de-Maoize" society. He spearheaded the government in restoring rights to intellectuals and returning their freedom of speech (intellectuals were the principle members of society to receive public ridicule in the form of verbal criticism, physical abuse, "reeducation" through labor, as well as execution, during the Cultural Revolution). Further, Deng advocated the Democracy Wall Movement of 1978-1979, elections to peoples' congresses, and led the rewriting of party history, which placed blame on Mao Zedong (Mao Zuh Dong) for the destructive outcomes of the "Great Leap Forward" and the "Cultural Revolution" (Bodman 1991: 23). Religious freedom was instituted, and people could worship publicly and educate the next generation in religious tradition, and confiscated property was returned. Institutions of higher education were re-opened. The majority of students entering during this period from 1977-1978 had waited ten years for the opportunity, and were the most active members of Chinese society in critiquing traditional culture. The principle authors of *Deathsong* were among this group.

The years following saw a rapid increase in the momentum toward political reform, although several incidents dampened this process: the Democracy Wall was closed down in 1979; the elections were interfered with in 1980; a campaign against 'spiritual pollution' was witnessed in 1983; and in early 1987, the movement against

"bourgeois liberalization" began (Bodman 1991:25).

In the fall of 1987, Zhao Ziyang (Jao Zuhyang) claimed the post of General Secretary. He advocated greater freedom in the media and more consultation and dialogue within Chinese society. Congress meetings were open to foreign and Chinese press. Both Zhao and Deng saw a market economy as a stage through which China must pass.

Deng dismantled communes, and family farms and rural entrepreneurs emerged. Some rural areas experienced a doubling of income. Setting up "Special Economic Zones" along the coastal regions, such as Macao and Shenzhen, allowed for economic experimentation. These cities are thriving today in the marketplace. By 1987, multitudes of government run enterprises were transformed into semi-private corporations, and price setting for market items came to an end. China came to rely on trade with other nations.

However, destructive consequences dovetailed these increases in financial prosperity. Despite the increase in available goods, people felt less secure. Prices that had been stabilized for years suddenly underwent an inflation rate of 20-30%. Great amounts of poverty-stricken people from the countryside headed into the cities looking for work, which resulted in high crime and prostitution. Intellectuals made less than cab drivers in some areas, which led to a feeling of frustration and despair among college students as well as matured intellectuals. Farmers couldn't get enough chemical fertilizer at government stores, and some urban workers found their salaries docked for 'voluntary' purchases of state bonds and contributions to the 1990 Asian games. Corruption was running high thanks to price reform.

A tolerance of ideological experimentation grew, and think tanks of all sorts were instituted to dissect the state of China. Many of the intellectuals involved were known as 'reformist intellectuals.' Scholars actively read articles from abroad to view China's tradition in a new light. Literature and film, known as "Scar Literature," explored previously forbidden areas, such as the abuse of political power and privilege existing in contemporary times.

*The Ugly Chinese*, a book written by Taiwanese dissident Bo Yang and printed in Mainland China in 1986, precluded the controversy incited by *Deathsong*. It declared Chinese culture dead, and questioned what Bo Yang saw as the dirty, noisy and quarreling nature of the Chinese. Bo Yang also declared that the reason for such difficulty in establishing democracy in China is the long standing stinky 'soy-bean paste vat' of Confucian tradition, which inhibits the Chinese people from thinking for themselves.

By 1988, a myriad of western books had been translated into Chinese. They flooded the bookstores; among these were books that laid out paths to success, including those of Lehigh University's own Lee Iacocca.

Television began to feature more diversified programs, including unedited foreign interviews of Chinese officials. Documentaries exploring past political figures broke new ground, all of which laid the groundwork for *Deathsong of the River*.

### Criticisms of *Deathsong*

In 1988, the Chinese government brought together scholars to collaborate on a public criticism of *Deathsong* (Bodman 1991:315-322).

The first of their criticisms is that *Deathsong's* historical facts are wrong. It has taken historical events and manipulated them to further the producer's own opinions, thus partaking in the same mistakes of those whom they criticize. They have rewritten history, referring to significant events in Chinese history and deeming them destructive. This is considered "bourgeois liberalization" and something like "counter revolutionary rebellion," two phrases which are often used by the Chinese government to refer to ideas that actively go against the grain of Marxism. Further, state these scholars, *Deathsong* denies the leading role of Marxism – indeed, it denies any authority at all to Marxism. Several times it blatantly mocks Lenin and Marx, presenting challenging questions and pointing out the false inability of Lenin and Marx to answer.

In addition to the above, they claim that *Deathsong of the River* ignorantly advocates "Wholesale Westernization" as a solution to China's problems without fully understanding what "Westernization" would mean for China:

[*Deathsong* is a reflection of] an unwillingness to pay the bitter struggle for social civilization and on the other as a rash desire to precipitously enjoy the fruits of human civilization; as a failure to consider making contributions to society, while at the same time blindly demanding one's own subjective needs from society; and whenever these needs are unsatisfied, they then blame heaven and man alike and blindly worship foreign things. ... They fail to understand the objective law that historical development does not turn to suit the subjective will of individuals.

And on the state of western culture:

The price of the development of Western European capitalism was the enormous suffering and sacrifice of the people of Western Europe and of their vast colonies and semi-colonies; the periodic turmoil and destruction in the world that it had caused is beyond count. Not to mention the destruction of world civilization caused by the two world wars, even now the threat of atomic war is a Sword of Damocles hanging over the entire human race. Does today's China still need to be 'pushed forward' by this sort of outside force? And to what point will this outside force push China?

Tu Weiming (Doo WayMeeng), a Chinese scholar of Confucianism, critiques *Deathsong* with a more balanced view, as he doesn't pledge allegiance to either the Marxist view or that of the West:

"There's no arguing that contemporary Western Civilization has tapped many wellsprings of civilization for humankind, such as science, democracy, freedom, human rights, the market economy, and so forth; but Western civilization has also brought humanity to the brink of self-destruction and even to the point of destroying both mankind and the ecosystem which has taken shape over billions of years. ... Quite a few outstanding thinkers in the contemporary West have begun to engage in a rather profound reflection on the principle direction of the spirit of contemporary Western civilization, and if this direction of the spirit were to be accepted by other peoples, than human civilization might change its course in a rather short time (Pin 1991: 301-310)."

The makers of *Deathsong* refute this statement by claiming that Dr. Tu is looking too far ahead. China hasn't come anywhere near that stage of development to start worrying about such negative consequences; it must not serve as deterrence to claiming prosperity for the nation as a whole.

Another flaw in the television series, Dr. Tu states, is its total condemnation of the Confucian tradition and communism as the villains of China's despair. It fails to see the differences and complexities between each and within each; even more unfortunately, it has failed to use the resource of tradition to reflect on the serious questions that it poses:

"When He Shang got started, I believe it was because reform needed encouragement, and of course this was a good thing. But no one realized that He Shang would offend many extremely conservative forces and sensitive nerves who would employ a narrow nationalism and narrow enthusiasm to criticize it. The conservative forces would employ all the resources of the tradition: 'You are unpatriotic, you abuse your ancestors.' This sort of criticism would be rather persuasive amongst the people, while the resources available to the Westernization faction would be much weaker, because they failed to make use of the resources of the tradition while not knowing how to employ material from the outside. What is unfortunate about the current discussion of He Shang, is that although this is a rare opportunity, and we have raised serious cultural topics, yet those people who truly have the ability to reflect on these questions do not dare to express themselves, because it has been politicized. The result of not speaking up is the worst sort of vicious cycle: the thinking of the most extreme pro-Westernization faction becomes even more extreme, while the most conservative forces become even more conservative. The vast majority of people are neither extremely pro-Westernization nor extremely conservative, but when these two forces are deadlocked in a see-saw battle, they become the silent majority."

A Western scholar criticized it by noting its use of the economy as a standard of success and failure. He proposed that the economy is neither the only, nor the ultimate, measurement of value, and that the agricultural civilization has value in and of itself. Su Xiaokang debated this by referencing the state of affairs for two-thirds of rural China: on average, three people share one dilapidated quilt, and they live through winter with no thickly padded clothing. For Westerners enjoying prosperity, reading about distant agricultural civilizations while in the comforts of a warm home, it is easy to romanticize about a way of living that is 'of the earth.' Likewise, it is easy for Su Xiaokang, an educated person with the resources to make a national television series, to romanticize about a way of living that is 'prosperous.'

Other criticisms include remarks on its blatant degradation of long standing pride symbols and dishonor to China's ancestors, calling the makers of the television series traitors (as stated by a member of the Communist Party).

Indeed, *Deathsong* invokes a glorified vision of the Western world. In this glorified vision, which carelessly lumps democracy and capitalism together, the harsh realities of capitalism are overlooked, as Tu Weiming states. While democracy would provide more individual freedom, *Deathsong* makes the claim that a market economy would naturally prevent corruption and lead to prosperity for the entire nation. Yet we see our own market economy loyally aiding in the corruption and disintegration of democracy in our government, education, and entire social system. Economic disparity is increasing in this nation with a stock market where there are "pay offs for lay offs" and where trade described as "free" sees environmental, health, and labor standards as obstacles (Sklar 1997: 65-71). Wealth is funneled into the hands of the few elite; this small elite class has the clout to shape public policy, political elections, research, education, and our justice system. Top executives in the US make more in a day than the average worker makes in a year (Collins 2000:2); corporations repeatedly dump toxic waste in poor neighborhoods and countries because it's cheap and no one will stop them; public schools in poor neighborhoods are literally falling to pieces while upper class schools spend some \$50,000 on each student (Sklar 1997: 65-71). Further, this information is ignored by those who have the power to define economic prosperity – the Gross National Product, the typical marker for measuring economic prosperity, does not take any of this into account. Those who are in power are benefiting most from this system, and they are also the ones who own the media and thus define the ways in which we understand our world – but *don't* understand our world.

If the makers of *Deathsong* came to intimately explore this vulnerable and tragically dirty underbelly of capitalism, they might be less eager to carelessly slap it together with the ideas of freedom, democracy and prosperity. Their point of view would, perhaps, be significantly different.

In conclusion, *Deathsong of the River* was viral in inciting the search for direction in the hearts of the Chinese people. A great strength of the series was the emotional energy contained not only in the voice of the narrator, but in the images of the Great

Wall, the Yellow River, Mao Zedong, and other culturally charged images flashing across the scene. Its message was obvious and simple, simultaneously unnerving and inspiring, and was presented to a ripe audience. Thus it successfully aroused a national and international discussion of the state of China, which continues on today, as China, remaining communist, also continues its economic liberalization. Just recently, Chinese Premier Li Peng outlined economic changes for China – changes more significant than any since economic reforms nearly twenty years ago (MacKinnon2001: [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)). One-third of government ministries will be closed down, and industries will be adversely affected and expected to lay off millions. However, in capitalist spirit, Li Peng favors offering help to these workers to find jobs in the private sector as well as encouraging self-employment. At this two-week meeting of China's parliament, one delegate, echoing the themes in *Deathsong*, stated, "This is something that every country that changes from a planned economy to a market economy has to go through. It's the price you have to pay (MacKinnon2001: [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com))." Although Li did remark on the problems of crime, corruption, and China's already growing economic inequality as problems that need to be tended to, it is obvious that he thinks the price is worth it. But of course, he won't be one of the industrial workers out of a job.

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## Viewing Lehigh's Past Through Print

SARAH LUCOT

Each day that I climbed the caged-in steps of the Special Collections section of the Linderman Library, it was like taking a step back in time to view life at Lehigh and American culture. I became engrossed in journals that allowed me to view a time in history, that I may never have gotten to view otherwise. In this dusty, dark section of Linderman that had about a dozen student-run journals, I found two that represent the Lehigh of today and yesterday.

I was searching for journals that were student-run and published student works. I feared that there would be so many good journals that I would have to limit which ones I thought represented Lehigh, and with this, I feared that there would be important historical sections left out. After two weeks of reading and note-taking on what the journals contained, I finally had to limit my choices. I thought long and hard about which ones would do justice to this institution and finally decided on *The Burr* and *The Lehigh Review*.

These two journals span the history of Lehigh starting with *The Burr* in the fall of 1881 and finishing with *The Lehigh Review*, which still remains an active student journal today. These journals provide interesting and entertaining historical information about Lehigh University and American culture; they contain articles, contests, illustrations, and advertisements that show the readers what was going on at Lehigh. I saw everything from propaganda messages urging the male population at Lehigh to support their country in World War I to advertisements for a new candy called "Lifesavers." Researching these journals was a fascinating step back in history.

### ***The Burr***

For those of you not familiar with University history, Lehigh was founded in 1865 as an all-male college with a focus on engineering. *The Burr* first appeared on campus in the fall of 1881 and ran until the fall of 1934. It was very popular with the students and the surrounding community. According to the journal *The Burr* was "...an index of ideas, aims and achievements" (Vol. 1, No. 1, Oct. 1882, pg. 2). I thought this was very appropriate for a university that had just been established less than ten



years before *The Burr* appeared on campus.

Not only did *The Burr* tell the reader what its title stood for, but it also explained to the readers the way that it should be read. The first staff decided that the journal could "...not be picked up carelessly and opened roughtlessly... it must be approached scientifically and in a spirit of reverence" (Vol. 1 (1), Oct 1882, pg. 2). After reading this I got a small glimpse into the atmosphere at Lehigh during the early years of its existence. The students were excited to learn and tried to approach all aspects of their life with enthusiasm and intellect.

*The Burr* was established because the student population felt that "Lehigh University [had] long needed a permanently established periodical to keep her students thoroughly posted on her own, and, as far as consistent, on general college matters and to break in on the monotony of [their] life [here]" (Vol. 1 (1), Oct. 1881, pg. 1). In the journal they wanted to focus on "reform and amusement" (Vol. 1 (1), Oct. 1881, pg. 1) and to accomplish this they presented "...matters as they appear[ed] to students' eyes, in the most forcible language at [their] command, and without any claim to infallibility" (Vol. 1 (1), Oct. 1881, pg. 1).

The first issues contained mostly information about campus happenings. The articles and blurbs talked about the proposal for a gymnasium announced at the Founder's Day celebration by President Lamberton; about the establishment of the mechanical engineering department, and even an article that questioned why Lehigh didn't have a good "...baseball nine..." (Vol.1 (1), Oct. 1881, pg. 2)

At the end of each *Burr* there were a few pages devoted to small bit of news (and by small bits, I mean a few sentences), called "Kernels." This section was also used as an upcoming events page, listing future class dinners, and updates about articles in past issues.

The journal changed with time and *The Burr* went from a lot of news type articles, no pictures, and only a few bits of poetry or jokes, to amusing comics that were elaborately drawn, creative writing to cover numerous pages and a few news briefs here and there. In only a few years *The Burr* went from being news based to focusing more on the creative side of Lehigh students. It became so popular that it was being published twice a month.

People who wanted to read *The Burr* purchased individual issues or subscribed on a yearly basis, unlike today where the journals produced here on campus are free of charge to students, faculty, and staff. While a year's subscription cost \$1.25, an issue cost a mere \$.15 in 1881. Luckily, by the end of the journal's run it was free to the campus community.

When it came to selecting the next year's staff, the weight was placed on the current year's staff. They searched for current members who "...during the year have done the best and most efficient work..." (Vol. 1 (1), Oct 1881, pg. 1). The founding members decided that "there [would] be two [staff members] chosen from each of the lowest three classes. These six will elect a seventh and with him, comprise the Board for the following year" (Vol. 1 (1), Oct. 1881, pg. 1). Although this may seem

like a confusing process to us, it must have worked for them because *The Burr* ran for an amazing fifty-three years!

*The Burr* was successful due to the hard work of their devoted staff. *The Burr* stayed afloat through funding of advertisements from local businesses. As the years went by they managed to attract more famous companies who wanted to run advertisements. As you flip through the delicate pages of the oldest *Burrs*, you will see many of them covered with advertisements for people trying to entice students to buy everything from laundry services to hotel accommodations.

Sadly, *The Burr* took a turn for the worst when it was banned from campus in November of 1934 by The Board of Publications here at Lehigh. The reason for the ban was because the staff defied the University's request to "...keep sex out of it" (Vol. LIV (4) November 1934, page 4). The November 1934 issue was definably entitled the *Keep Sex Out of It Issue* and it should come as no surprise to the reader of this essay that the pages of the final issue were covered with articles, pictures, poems and jokes about sex and anything related to sex. At every turn of the page in this issue the word "sex" jumped out.

If you remember from your history classes, to print something on the topic of sex during the 1930s was considered scandalous and very rarely available for the public eye. The representatives of the University did what they thought was best for this institution by banning *The Burr*.

The issue contained such things as a section on what famous people would say about the subject of sex.

"Shakespeare: A pox on't! A plague o both thy houses!

Darwin: Behold the origin of the species!

George Washington: I cannot tell a lie; I did it with my hatchet!

Napoleon: Not tonight, Josephine" (Vol. LIV (4) Nov 1934 page 16).

The sexual comments go on and on in this issue. As a person living in the twenty-first century, where sex is an acceptable topic of discussion, I found some of the comments and stories offensive. I also felt that the editor in chief at the time, Malcolm Baxter, set a very bad example for Lehigh students.

### **The Lehigh Review**

*The Lehigh Review* created literary competition for *The Burr* when it appeared on campus in May of 1927, and we are lucky enough to still have it published for us today. This journal was, and still is, put out by the College of Arts and Sciences. The journal accepts literary pieces from any student who is interested in having their work published, no matter what school they are in. The journal tries to put in a diverse amount of writings so that everyone who reads it will find something that interests them.

For this section of my essay I was privileged enough to have the help of Eric A. Weiss from the class of 1939 and 1940. Mr. Weiss was a member of *The Lehigh Review* for all five years of his career at Lehigh. Using these five years, Mr. Weiss was

kind enough to tell me his experiences.

As President Richards wrote on the inside cover of the first issue, the journal was created to "...represent the best in academic life of the University without encroaching upon the legitimate fields of existing publications" (Vol. (1) May 1927 page 7). In other words, they wanted to create a journal that would be entertaining and informative, but at the same time would not take the spotlight off of any other publication that existed at that time.

The journal was filled with advertisements from companies who produced the popular products of the time period. There were ads from Lucky Strike Cigarettes and Uniform Bricker's Air Conditioned Bread (Vol. X (1) Sept. 1936, pg. 1.5). Along with the money the publication received from these advertisements, the Student Activity Fund provided them with some financial assistance.

The pages of *The Lehigh Review* were covered mostly with intellectual articles dealing with politics, sports and the very promising steel industry that lived in Lehigh's backyard. There were also small sections devoted to humorous blurbs, jokes, comics and drawings done by students. One of the more interesting articles written about the steel industry discussed the unionizing of the steel industry. This article informed Lehigh students that "...today labor cries again [to unionize], along new lines and employing new tactics...under the fiery leadership of John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Works..." (Vol. X (1) Sept. 1936 pg. 11).

The first issues of *The Lehigh Review* contained a Lehigh facts section entitled "In Our World." The goal of this section was to give students the opportunity to expand their knowledge on the University. Some of the questions in the journal were things like...

"In the history of the University, what was the lowest tuition fee?

What were the first three University buildings on campus?

What is the University's motto, and what does it mean? (Vol. 1 (1) May 1927 page 21.)

Each class was allowed to submit answers to these questions and they were given point totals and bragging rights if they won.

*The Lehigh Review*, in February of 1937, published a section entitled *Dear, Dear, Sir*. The section contained letters that were supposedly salvaged from wastebaskets around campus. One specific example was written to Mr. Howard Leech who was the head librarian at the time. The letter went like this:

"Dear Mr. Leech,

I have two questions to ask: (1) If you were lost on a deserted island, what three books would you want to have with you? (2) If you were lost on the third floor stacks [of Linderman Library] looking for the fourth floor steps, what three islands would you want to have with you?

Signed: Bewildered Senior" (Vol. X (6) Feb. 1937, pg. 9).

For those of you reading this essay who have not been lucky enough to visit the Linderman Library, it is like a big maze that may take until your senior year, or longer, to figure out. Letters like this gave the journal the humor the students demanded, but at the same time it did not cross any inappropriate boundaries.

Today's Lehigh students share *The Lehigh Review* as a link to past Lehigh students. As a current Lehigh student I have loved opening up this journal, that is so familiar because of its current existence, and know that a fellow student was reading the same thing over seventy-five years ago. Student publications provide a way to link students together who may never have been otherwise. They provide us with a way to see the past through the eyes of Lehigh alumni in a way that is unlike any other. Maybe in another seventy-five years some senior working on their thesis will come across these time preserving journals and analyze what I have experienced during my four great years here at Lehigh. Hopefully they will realize, as I have, that though the times have changed the experience that is set in stone in our hearts has not.



*"And the swimming pool isn't in  
Drown Hall!"*



## U R UR Own Computer

SARAH ZURAT

This paper will begin with a discussion of the inspiration for the project, Howard Finster's "I am my own TV." Then, I will explain the project itself, with discussion of the process, the intent behind the methods, and the overall meaning and experience that I hope people will gain from viewing "U R UR OWN COMPUTER."

At first, Finster's "I am my own TV" seems crude and simple, but it is full of meaning underneath all its beautiful simplicity, as is the case with most of his work. To analyze Finster's "TV" piece, it is important to identify the components. Finster holds the frame of an old television around his face. The television frame is a found object; it is something already "found" in the world. It is not made or crafted by the artist; it is taken from the world, and then manipulated by the artist. Often, artists use these found objects in very different or unusual manners from the object's original intent.

Finster's piece calls for audience participation. "I am my own TV" is interactive on different levels—style and content for both the creator and viewer. First, it is interactive on the level of the artist. The creator is interacting with the materials she is using to make the art. The painter interacts with the paints and canvas. The sculptor interacts with the clay or wood or stone, or in this case, found objects that she uses.

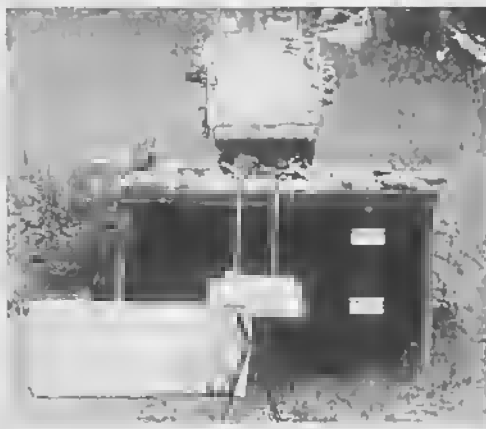
Finster takes this interaction and manipulation of materials a step further. By putting his actual face in the picture, he makes the piece direct and personal. The head is not an unknown face cut out of a magazine, nor is it a nondescript face made out of other materials, for example from carved plaster or wood. No matter how symbolic or precise a carved face may be it is not the same as seeing an actual face. The face in Finster's piece is his own. It is symbolic of everyone's face, yet at the same time, it is so direct that the viewers react differently to it than they would to just another, unidentifiable face. This can be compared to a written theory; it may be difficult for the reader to really get a personal feel for what the writer is trying to convey when only abstract theories are discussed. Yet, when a direct example is used, the audience can then more easily relate, understand, and respond to the example. The same is true of Finster's work. The viewer can feel a more direct connection to the art by seeing Finster's face in the piece.

Furthermore, Finster's work is interactive through the use of the found object, the television frame. We, the viewers, have all watched a television and can identify what the television frame is. We are all seeing the *same* television frame, but at the same time we are seeing something *different*. Each of us has our own way of identifying and relating to our unique idea of what television means to us.

Interaction has been described in terms of the medium and the style, how the artist uses the materials. The next level is through the content, or the meaning behind the style. The purpose of Finster's work is to call us to be active, not be passive in our lives or our stimulation. He is questioning how we can sit in front of a television, passively receive all the images and information, and be "entertained" without thinking for ourselves. Finster is calling us to be our own stimulation, showing us that we need our own imagination for entertainment and learning. He is encouraging us to look inside ourselves for insight and inspiration, not just at a TV screen full of advertisements. He is calling us to be active according to what we find within ourselves rather than just passive receptants to whatever is broadcast upon us. Thus, the meaning of Finster's piece is calling us to be more interactive, with our own imaginations, and with the imagination of others.

U R UR OWN COMPUTER was first thought of when I saw a slide of Finster's "I am my own TV." I saw the slide and instantly something clicked. I wanted to create my own version of that but I wanted to use a computer. As television has been the most influential media in the last few decades, the computer is taking its place. I wanted to somehow convey the feelings of being more imaginative through your computer, as Finster had with the television. Since that day in class when I first saw the slide, this project has been taking shape in my head and physically in the form that it is today.

U R UR OWN COMPUTER was created from an old computer monitor and pieces of the insides of computers. I considered hollowing out the monitor, and using the frame to surround a cast plaster head of myself or some other type of head. I would call it, "I am my own computer", but that seemed too close to Finster's piece. I wanted to do something different and express my own interpretation of the computer media and our interaction to it. I began to ask, "what makes the computer what it is?" The computer has no identity just by itself. The computer is only useful in terms of people. People are the ones who make, design, engineer, and market these machines. Computers are made to help people do work, and



do it better. People create computers for people. Humans are behind the machines. With that in mind, I began to think of the human interaction with computers, both sides of it: humans are not only behind computers, but also in front of them.

I sit in front of my computer as I write this. As I press the keys, I am making an imprint into the computer. I am writing pages, creating files, using different applications, and choosing what program to use, how to use it, and even how to change it to my specifications. My impression, what I have browsed, and what I have written or what I have created, is left on the computer. This led me to the idea of the computer being a reflection of the person who is using it.

Placing pieces of a mirror on the monitor screen is meant to provoke people to think about the reflection of themselves through the medium of the computer. Is the computer a reflection of you? If yes, how so? If no, why not? How accurate is this reflection? I wanted to use broken, mirror pieces so that the image looking back at you would be distorted. How does the computer distort or fragment your sense of yourself? How does the computer distort or fragment, or perhaps bring together, perspectives or objects in the world?

The outside of the computer is covered with the internal pieces of motherboards and other bits of the insides. I like the idea of turning things inside out. I question the typical conception of the object, once I see the what is usually not seen. Viewing the insides- the messiness, chaos, precision, organization, and the unexpectedness of what is behind the shiny metal or plastic, can change one's perception.

In the case of this computer sculpture, I was hoping to show that those square shapes of motherboards and bits of chips and circuits are all that is physically within the computer. What is inside a computer is not some miraculous, magic, mysterious material that makes this machine do wonders. (Although, a computer can be all of those- miraculous, magical, and mysterious, and do wondrous things if used or perceived in those ways.) All that is inside the computer that links us to thousands of web sites, that delivers us to enormous amounts of information, and that gives us phenomenal communications, are just some chips and circuits. That is it. These motherboards have their own beauty of complexity with simplicity, but they are not what make computers so essential and beneficial, or potentially harmful. What makes computers what they really are and what makes the Internet an unbelievable force are people. The humans behind, or in front of the machine, are really what make the machines and the entire system work.

In addition to the personal aspect of the computer, I am hoping that *U R UR OWN COMPUTER* prompts viewers to think more critically about their own computer, Internet, and technology use. How much time do I spend every day on a computer? What exactly am I doing all that time? How much time do I spend interacting with people through email or instant messenger, rather than face-to-face conversations? Am I getting more isolated, or more "connected", or both at the same time? What do I hate about using the computer or Internet? What do I enjoy the most? How am I learning, not just being entertained? How am I being active, not



just a passive browser on the Net? What can I do to make my computer and the Internet a better community? I hope that people ask themselves these questions all the time. If my piece encourages these thoughts, then it has been a success.





## No Man's Identity: *Invisible Man* and *The Odyssey*

JULIE MESLIN

*For it is through our names that we first place ourselves in the world. Our names, being the gift of others, must be made our own.*

—Ralph Ellison, "Hidden Name and Complex Fate"

The journeys described in *The Odyssey* and *Invisible Man* are quests for identity. In *The Odyssey*, we are witness to the making of a legend. Odysseus faces every challenge imaginable in his efforts to return to his wife and son, and his homeland. The narrator in *Invisible Man* also faces an array of challenges, but does not seek to return home. This is because he faces the one challenge that Odysseus does not—that of ascribing an identity to himself, in other words, naming himself. While Odysseus is changed by his adventures and so returns not merely a war hero, but a survivor of the wrath of the gods, he also returns with the intent of resuming his role as King of Ithaca. He travels towards an established identity. The narrator of *Invisible Man*, however, does not travel towards an identity, but rather, away from the identities others attempt to establish for him.

Throughout the two stories, one can find many parallels in the significance of naming. The power of the name, its ability to label, categorize, identify and disguise, is evident in the way Odysseus and the narrator of *Invisible Man* use their own names to survive. It is difficult to speak of identity without speaking of names. It is natural for us to wonder at the namelessness of the narrator in *Invisible Man*: Why does he remain nameless? Does he know his own name? Is he a singular person or a representation of many men (and possibly women)? The narrator remains nameless in order to better illustrate his invisibility which becomes his anonymity. In this way too, Odysseus depends upon the power in a name to make himself anonymous when attacked by the Cyclops. Since the Cyclops does not know who Odysseus is, beyond being his potential victim, he cannot call out for help against the unidentified soldier. In both cases, we can see the importance of being identified by name—how it betrays or protects. Odysseus is an example of man with the freedom to lay claim to his own name, while the nameless narrator is a man who seems to have no name, since he cannot be seen by others and so is never identified.

As infants, we do not choose our own names. Our names are given to us, and while we may grow into them during the course of our lives, initially they reflect the intentions of those who gave the names, usually the parents. In his book *Man in the Middle Voice*, John Peradotto says, "...it is common for parents to give a name expressing their own state of mind or condition at or shortly before the child's birth, a name...which is meant to express the present or past of the namer, not the future of the named" (Peradotto, 135). We learn of the origin of Odysseus's name late in the poem, in Book 19, when Euryclia is washing his feet and sees the scar she knows so well. The scar was from an encounter with a boar when Odysseus was visiting his grandfather Autolycus. She remembers how Odysseus had been named by Autolycus, his grandfather who Peradotto describes as "the unsocialized individualist (*autos*) par excellence, living wolf-like on the fringes of society, a cunning predator" (Peradotto, 129). Upon visiting his daughter and son-in-law, Euryclia asks Autolycus to name the newborn boy, to which he replies, "Just as I have come from afar, creating pain for many—men and women across the good green earth—so let his name be *Odysseus*...the Son of Pain, a name he'll earn in full" (Homer, 403). Odysseus is marked by those who have come before him, by his namer, before he can even speak. Autolycus's prophecy is indeed fulfilled. Odysseus faces much pain and brings pain unto others he faces in battle.

Since we do not ever learn the given name of the narrator in *Invisible Man*, we can only make assumptions about its origin. Most likely, his parents gave him a name when he was born and he assumed their last name. But whose last name was it? His family name was probably that of a slave owning family—the one who owned his ancestors. As Black Muslims, most famously Malcolm X, disassociated themselves from their given last names in an effort to identify with their African ancestors, so too does Ellison refuse to reveal his narrator's assigned white name. The narrator does *have* a name. It is not that he was never given one, but rather, that Ellison chooses not to tell the readers what it is. Ellison names and disguises in that he does give the narrator a name but also takes it away by not revealing that name to the reader. This technique simultaneously draws us into the novel, by having us identify with the narrator who we know only as "I" and pushes us away, outside the novel because we know that everyone knows the narrator's name but us.

Once a name is given, what does it *do* for the individual? Ellison helps to determine the fate of his character because he is the namer. But how much does the name, or lack thereof, influence the person who possesses it? In order to answer this, consider why and how we use names. Our names are used to describe us as individuals. We sign our name to things to show that they belong to us. We call ourselves by names so that people may speak of us. We often share the last name with people in our own family as a way of showing that we belong together, share blood. Peradotto argues, however, that far from making us individuals, our names actually do the opposite. He explains, "Naming is the extreme form of categorization because it takes what most philosophers have thought to be incomprehensible—the indi-

*viduum*—and creates the illusion that it has been trapped in comprehension" (Peradotto, 152). The name given at birth is assigned and static. As the named person grows, develops a personality, makes decisions about his or her life, the name stays the same. After years of living with our names, we may feel that they belong to us, that somehow they describe something that is uniquely us. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Our names do not evolve as we do—they remain vestiges of the namer's hopes, feelings, and predictions. Not only are we born into names, but into the connotation of the names. "Everyone is born into a social context, named, classified, located in society before one has any say in the matter. One is fixed within a system of constraints that both limits one's own power to act and makes one a clear focus or target for the activity of others" (Peradotto, 161). By refusing to reveal the name of the narrator, Ellison protects him from immediate classification by readers. We may classify him under other terms as we read—Black, Brother, orator—but we must learn the facts of his life in order to do this. We are encouraged to see him as an individual in a set of specific circumstances.

Of course, it remains the responsibility of the reader to truly *see* the nameless narrator. He immediately tells us that he is invisible. He also tells us why he is invisible. Like his name, it is not that he does not *have* a body, but merely that people refuse to see it. It is up to us, as careful observers, to take the opportunity to see this man as a person—as living flesh, blood, heart and mind. Some may choose to read the narrator as another nameless, faceless character. They too have refused to see him. They have fallen into the trap of simple classification: He is a Black man. He is a character in a book. In either case, they think, he isn't real.

This is the same trap that Odysseus sets for the Cyclops in order to save his own life. First, Odysseus offers the creature wine, which he gulps down until he is "blind drunk" (Homer, 223, line 419). When the creature asks Odysseus's name, Odysseus replies, "Nobody". Then Odysseus stabs him in the eye with a burning wooden stake so that Cyclops is literally blinded. In his pain, the creature screams for help to which his neighbors reply, "What, Polyphemus, what in the world's the trouble?" (Homer, 224, line 450) Polyphemus cries out the name Odysseus has given him, "Nobody, friends... Nobody's killing me now by fraud and not by force!" (Homer, 224, line 454) His friends do not come to rescue him from Odysseus because they think "Nobody" isn't real.

Odysseus renames himself and escapes death. He calls himself "nū tis", which literally means "no one at all" or "no man" and so *becomes* nobody in the eyes of the other neighboring Cyclops. It is only Polyphemus who knows that "Nobody" is real because he feels pain at the Nobody's hands. Like the narrator in *Invisible Man*, Odysseus knows the magic of words. He knows that they can control people and their perceptions.

What about the perceptions of the named? Odysseus does not worry that he will become someone else once he renames himself. The nameless narrator in *Invisible Man* does worry:

I sensed vaguely and with a flash of panic that the moment I walked out upon the platform and opened my mouth I'd be someone else. Not just a nobody with a manufactured name that might have belonged to anyone, or to no one. But another personality (Ellison, 336).

The "manufactured" name is not his own, but the one given to him by Brother Jack upon entering the Brotherhood. It is a mask, a prop, not an identity. It is the thing that the life as a speaker for the Brotherhood will define. The nameless narrator wonders at who this Brotherhood person will become—the one who looks like him, sounds like him, but does not share his name. Odysseus, on the other hand, renames himself and more importantly, has the opportunity to tell his defeated enemy his true name, and therefore, his true identity. As he sails away from the enraged beast he calls out, "Cyclops—if any man on the face of the earth should ask you who blinded you, shamed you so—say Odysseus, raider of cities, he gouged out your eye, Laertes' son who makes his home in Ithaca" (Homer, 227, line 559). The nameless narrator reminds himself that the name change, unlike Odysseus's, is permanent, "My name was different: I was under orders. Even if I met Mary on the street, I'd have to pass her by unrecognized" (Ellison, 336). When the narrator attempts to reclaim his identity, the Brothers who have renamed him are furious. The narrator has taken part in a funeral procession and given a speech for a fallen Black Brother-turned-traitor without the permission of his superiors. He explains, "A brother, a leading member was shot down by a policeman. We had lost our prestige in the community. I saw the chance to rally the people, so I acted" (Ellison, 466). Brother Jack and his cohorts are enraged that he exercised his "personal responsibility" and remind him, "You were not hired to think" (Ellison, 469).

By this time the narrator has recovered from treatment at the hands of the paint factory doctors who electrocute him until he cannot remember who or where he is. After the procedure, one that the doctors hope will "produce the results of a prefrontal lobotomy without the negative effects of the knife", they hold up a slate with that reads, "Who was your mother?" and all the narrator can think of is the word "THINK" (Ellison, 236, 241). He is disoriented and emotionally distraught as he realizes he cannot remember his own name or the names of his family. Hooked up to the lobotomy machine and "fretting" over his identity, he comes to this realization:

I had no desire to destroy myself even if it destroyed the machine; I wanted freedom, not destruction. It was one constant flaw—myself. There was no getting around it. I could no more escape than I could think of my identity. Perhaps, I thought, the two things are involved with each other. When I discover who I am, I'll be free. (Ellison, 243)

Once again, the relationship between name and identity is paramount. Odysseus would not consider himself free of the Cyclops until he could claim the victory as his

own, that is, not as *Nobody's* but as Odysseus's. As the nameless narrator notes, he cannot escape until he knows his identity.

Soon the narrator is released and the doctors tell him, "Well, boy, it looks as though you're cured...You're a new man" (Ellison, 245). We are never quite sure how and why the narrator ended up in the hospital (and neither is he) therefore we don't know what he is cured of, but only that he is "a new man". This must be true. Regardless of whether or not the lobotomy worked, certainly the experience has changed the narrator and set him on his course anew. Odysseus also is changed by his adventures, by every monster he defeats, every temptation he resists. The identity, then, is in constant flux. While Odysseus knows all along that his name is not actually "Nobody", but rather that it is a disguise, so too does the narrator know that he is not Brother \_\_\_\_\_, but that he still has his own name. Their *identities*, however, are changed by the experience of donning a new name, permanent or not. "Outis [Nobody] becomes the proper name for the emptiness that in reality all narrative persons share...as therefore capable of becoming *any* character, of assuming *any* predicate, of doing or enduring *anything*..." (Peradotto, 155). This "emptiness" is the freedom of evolving personhood—the lack of restraints, classification, static naming.

When Odysseus finally returns home, he is not immediately recognized by his family. According to Peradotto, "Philosophers cite two competing criteria for the reidentification of persons: the identity of the bodies that they have or the identity of their sets of memories" (Peradotto, 156). The first one to recognize Odysseus is his old nurse, Euryclia, who notes the scar he has had since he was a boy, seeing through his disguise. Odysseus reveals his identity to his servants Philoetius and Eumaeus so that they may help him defeat the suitors who are gathered in his palace, vying for a place beside Queen Penelope. Odysseus's proves his identity to his son Telemachus when he uses the bow and arrow that all the other suitors had attempted to string but failed: "...the shaft with its weighted brazen head shot free! 'My son,' Odysseus looked to Telemachus and said, 'your guest, sitting in your house, has not disgraced you... My strength's not broken yet'" (Homer, 438, line 470). The final test lies in Penelope, who is reluctant to believe that her husband has actually returned after twenty years at sea. While she recognizes Odysseus by sight once he has shed his disguise, she is not easily convinced. " 'Strange man,' wary Penelope said. 'I'm not so proud, so scornful, nor am I overwhelmed by your quick change... You look—how well I know—the way he looked, setting sail from Ithaca years ago'" (Homer, 461, line 193). Instead of being assured merely by the "identity of the body", Penelope presses Odysseus to identify his memories. She tries to trick him by alluding to their bed, which she tells the servant to move out of the bridal chamber. But Odysseus catches on and replies, "Woman—your words cut me to the core! Who could move my bed? Impossible task... I know I built it myself" (Homer, 461, line 205). The bed is built around an olive tree which grows up inside the chamber and so cannot be moved. Upon hearing the stranger explain the story of the bed, Penelope sees that he

is in fact her husband: "Living proof—Penelope felt her knees go slack, her heart surrender, recognizing the strong clear signs Odysseus offered" (Homer, 462, line 230). Odysseus is welcomed back by his family and resumes his role as King of Ithaca, husband of Queen Penelope, father of Telemachus.

The last book of *The Odyssey* is entitled "Peace". Telemachus is prepared to join his father in battle, but the god Athena intervenes and tells the men to "shed no more blood—make peace at once!" (Homer, 485, line 285) There is also a battle at the end of *Invisible Man*, but unlike *The Odyssey*, no god swoops down from the sky to stop the bloodshed. There is no savior Athena: " 'LnoK, men, give me a break, we're all black folks together...Nobody cares'" (Ellison, 560). Again we see the name "Nobody" in its double meaning as the narrator continues, "Though I knew we cared, they at last cared enough to act..." (Ellison, 560). The narrator sees that no person is going to stop the violence in Harlem but at the same time, he knows that it is not impossible to stop. It can be stopped by the Black people themselves. While they may be seen (or *not* seen) as "nbnodies" by others, they do, in fact, exist. They do care.

The narrator can find no other way to win than to escape underground. While his homecoming is unlike Odysseus's who is greeted by his family, the nameless narrator does experience a similar realization of return. He says from down in the final pit, "Then I thought, This is the way it's always been, only now I know it—and rested back, calm now...It's a kind of death without hanging, I thought, a death alive" (Ellison, 566). At first the narrator believes that he will remove the lid above him and return to the streets in the morning but he never does, and he seems to be writing to us from this pit. At the end of the novel, he is content with his place in the earth: "Here, at least, I could try to think things out in peace, or if not in peace, in quiet. I would take up residence underground. The end was in the beginning" (Ellison, 571). *Invisible Man* does not end with "peace" in the same way as *The Odyssey*. The narrator is not yet free, he does not yet know who he is, and unlike Odysseus, he cannot return to his family so that they might remind him of his memories.

Still, there is hope in the end that is also the beginning. What Peradotto observes about last chapter of *The Odyssey* could also be said of *Invisible Man*: "It is the zero-point where every story begins, the zero-point where every story ends, rich with the possibility of another beginning" (Peradotto, 170). In the Epilogue to *Invisible Man*, the narrator reveals some of the truths he has learned about his identity. He remembers his grandfather's words and instead of casting them aside as he had done in his youth, thinks about them, considers the possibilities they offer:

Did he mean say 'yes' because he knew that the principle was greater than the men...Or did he mean that we had to take the responsibility for all of it...Or was it, did he mean that we should affirm the principle because we, through no fault of our own, were linked to all the others in the loud, clamoring semi-visible world... (Ellison, 574)

He decides that it is time to return to the world above with his new knowledge because, he says, "...there's a possibility that even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play" (Ellison, 581). Like Odysseus, he returns to the battle, unsure of what the outcome or who his allies will be. He is no more visible than when he went underground, but he has claimed his identity. He knows that though others may not see him, their blindness cannot wipe out his existence. When Odysseus was away at sea for twenty years, desperately fighting his way back to his home, his wife Penelope kept faith in his existence and refused to marry another. Odysseus's homecoming is the return to his identity, kept intact by his wife and son. The nameless narrator returns to the world with his own identity, not given, not remembered, but created by himself, suited for the life of an invisible man.

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## Contributors

**ERIKA BERG** is a senior English, Journalism, and German triple major from Heidelberg, Germany. When she is not busy watching New Kids On The Block tour videos and reliving her gawky junior high days, she travels back and forth from Bethlehem to Bologna, Italy, where she schools the natives in ghettospeak. Her favorite pastimes are blasting Heart so she can practice her Trip Fontaine strut and analyzing the same eight maternal melodramas over and over and over...

**MEHNAZ ARA CHOUDRY** is a sophomore English and American Studies Major, and can be found on most days in Dtown debating with Prof. Patty Ingham on whether the Eng. Dept. lacks "jouissance". When not begging Prof. Dawn Keeley to look at it just one last time she will be working at the *Banana Factory* making sure no one steals the sculptures or learning how to hold a cigarette in a suggestive manner at the Welcome Inn. She hopes to one day have her work published in a *Feminist Theory and the Body Anthology* edited by Vivi Steele, and heat out some Berkeley grad student and publish the definitive critical theory companion to the SCREAM trilogy.

**NIHAR DESAI** of Shelton, CT graduated in 2001 with a bachelor's degree in political science. He was enrolled in the accelerated medical program in conjunction with MCP-Hahnemann School of Medicine and during his three year tenure at Lehigh also completed minors in molecular biology and economics. Although medical school is in his imminent future, he is strongly considering a career in public policy or hospital administration, ideas he was exposed to as he completed internships in London and in the Clinton White House. His interests outside of academia include writing, playing golf, and traveling.

**BERNADETTE DI TORO** is a graduating senior majoring in Psychology.

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**OLIVIA N. KYLE** will graduate in 2002 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Accounting. Currently, she is a Dean Scholar, Treasurer of the Class of 2002, and the Editor for Lehigh's Accounting Club. She hopes to obtain a Presidential Scholarship so that she can remain at Lehigh for an extra year after graduation (and hold off entering the "real world" for a little bit longer!). She plans to attend law school for a career in Tax Law after gaining several years of experience in the accounting field. Additionally, she enjoys writing, computers, dancing, and music.

**SARAH R. LUCOT** is currently a senior English major and is expecting her degree this spring. It is her hope that many years from now a future Lehigh student will be researching what she has focused on in her contribution in this year's Review.

**FERNANDO LUIS MALDONADO** is the barbaric YAWP that rises above the treetops and flies into the sunrise. He is an anarchist, rebel, and transcendental nihilist. Since he is beyond good and evil he does not condemn you for your practices, only your stupidity. Being a third year English major he knows all there is to know about nothing, and has no plans to do anything with it.

**JULIE MESLIN** is a Senior from Connecticut.

**STEPHANIE NELSON**. When I know who I am (only sometimes, and now might not be that time) I'm a karma-free cooking, Chinese karaoke singing, funkyfun radical feminist carving out my space in this atmosphere by sharing in radicalrevolutionary consciousness through political activism and social change and I can't believe I'll have a college degree in Comparative Religion Studies in two months! And I'm from a little town between Hell and Ann Arbor.

**VISHAL PATEL** is currently a junior from Scranton, PA. He is pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Molecular Biology and a minor in Psychology. Upon graduation, he aspires to attend either Medical School or Optometry School in August 2002. Vishal would like to thank Professor Bearn, Professor Levine, and the staff of the *Lehigh Review* for a chance to have his essay published in this renowned journal.

**JEFFREY SYRACUSE** is a Junior Philosophy and Classics major. He likes to spend most of his time reading the Latin greats and struggling through Ancient Greek. Despite his post-modern associates, he hopes to instigate a great classical revival in philosophy. When not confined to the basement of some library, he rests his brain with Classic Rock.

**SARAH ZURAT** is a junior philosophy major and religion studies minor. She is from Hilton Head, South Carolina. Her hobbies include soccer, hiking, juggling, creative writing, and making digital resumes. She likes to travel and is currently studying abroad in Belgium this semester.

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